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ALLEN TATE

To Whom is the Poet Responsible?[1]

AND FOR WHAT? The part of the question that I have used as the title has been widely asked in our generation. I have seldom heard anybody ask the second part: *For what?* I shall have to assume, without elucidating it, a certain moral attitude towards the idea of responsibility which is perhaps as little popular in our time as the accused poetry that has given rise to the controversy. Thus I take it for granted that nobody can be held generally responsible, for if our duties are not specific they do not exist. It was, I think, the failure to say what the modern poet was responsible *for* that made it easy to conclude, from the attacks ten years ago by Mr. MacLeish and Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, that in some grandiose sense the poet should be held responsible to society for everything that nobody else was paying any attention to. The poet was saddled with a total responsibility for the moral, political, and social well-being; it was pretty clearly indicated that had he behaved differently at some indefinite time in the near or remote past the international political order itself would not have been in jeopardy, and we should not perhaps be at international loggerheads today. We should not have had the Second World War, perhaps not even the first.

The historic political suspicion of poetry is one thing; but the attacks that I have alluded to were by men of letters, one of them a poet—and this is another thing altogether. I do not know to what extent the Marxist atmosphere of the thirties influenced the attacks. In trying to get to the bottom of them one may dismiss too quickly the Communist party-line as a perversion of the original Platonic rejection of poetry which holds that the arts of sensible imitation are a menace to the political order. One must dismiss it respectfully, because it contains a fundamental if one-eyed truth: that is to say, from Plato on there is in this tradition of thought the recognition that however useful poetry may be as

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[1]A brief version of this paper was read at Bennington College on April 16, 1950; present text, at a symposium of the Committee for Cultural Freedom, May 10, 1951.

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a civilizing virtue, it should not be allowed to govern the sensibility of persons who run the state. One may scarcely believe that Sophocles *as poet* was appointed *strategos* in the Samian war, even though that honorific office followed upon the great success of the *Antigone* in the Dionysia of 440 B. C. What I am getting at here is that, were we confronted with an unreal choice, it would be better to suppress poetry than to misuse it, to expect of it an order of action that it cannot provide. (Stalinist Russia seems to do both: it suppresses poetry and supports party verse.) In any literary history that I have read there is no record of a poet receiving and exercising competently high political authority. Milton wrote Cromwell's Latin correspondence, and tracts of his own; but he was never given power; and likewise his successor, Andrew Marvell. We have read some of Shelley's more heroic assertions, in "The Defense of Poetry", into the past, where we substitute what Shelley said ought to have been for what was. The claim that poets are "unacknowledged legislators" is beyond dispute, if we understand that as legislators they should remain unacknowledged and not given the direction of the state. This limit being set, we are ready to understand what Shelley had really to say—which is the true perception that there is always a reciprocal relation between life and art, at that point at which life imitates art.

If poetry makes us more conscious of the complexity and meaning of our experience, it may have an eventual effect upon action, even political action. The recognition of this truth is not an achievement of our own age; it is very old. Our contribution to it I take to be a deviation from its full meaning, an exaggeration and a loss of insight. Because poetry may influence politics we conclude that poetry is merely politics, or a kind of addlepated politics, and thus not good for anything. Why this has come about there is not time to say here, even if I knew. One may point out some of the ways in which it has affected our general views, and hence see how it works in us.

How does it happen that literary men themselves blame the poets first when society goes wrong? The argument we heard ten years ago runs somewhat as follows: The rise of Hitlerism (we were not then looking too narrowly at Stalinism) reflects the failure of our age to defend the principles of social and political democracy, a failure resulting from the apathy of responsible

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classes of society, those persons who have charge of the means of public influence that was formerly called language (but is now called "communications"). These persons are the writers, more particularly the poets or "makers", whose special charge is the purity of language and who represent the class of writers presumably at its highest. The makers, early in the nineteenth century, retired to a private world of their own invention, where they cultivated certain delusions—for example, their superiority to practical life, the belief in the autonomy of poetry, and the worship of the past. Some of them, like Baudelaire, actively disliked democracy. Their legacy to our tortured age turned out to be at once the wide diffusion and the intensification of these beliefs, with the result that we became politically impotent, and totalitarianism went unchecked.

This argument is impressive and we cannot wholly dismiss it; for directed somewhat differently it points to a true state of affairs: there was a moral and political apathy in the western countries, and there was no decisive stand against Nazism until it was too late to prevent war. Did the men of letters, the "clerks", have a monopoly upon this apathy? We may answer this question from two points of view. First, is there anything in the nature of poetry, as it has been sung or written in many different kinds of societies, which would justify putting so great a burden of *general* responsibility upon the man of imagination? Secondly, was there no other class of "intellectuals" in the modern world, scientists, philosophers, or statesmen, who might also be called into account?

If we address ourselves to the second question first, we shall have to observe that philosophers, scientists, and politicians have by and large assumed that they had no special responsibility for the chaos of the modern world. Mr. Einstein not long ago warned us that we now have the power to destroy ourselves. There was in his statement no reference to his own great and perhaps crucial share in the scientific progress which had made the holocaust possible. If it occurs, will Mr. Einstein be partly to blame, provided there is anybody left to blame him? Will God hold him responsible? I shall not try to answer that question. And I for one should not be willing to take the responsibility, if I had the capacity, of settling the ancient question of how much natural knowledge should be placed in the hands of men whose moral and

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spiritual education has not been impressive: by such men I mean the majority at all times and places, and more particularly the organized adolescents of all societies known as the military class.

Here we could meditate upon (or if we like better to do it, pray over) the spectacle, not military, widely reported in the newspapers, of the President of Harvard University congratulating his colleagues with evident delight when the first atom bomb was exploded in the desert. Among those present at Los Alamos there on July 14, 1945, at five-thirty in the morning, were Mr. Conant and Mr. Bush. "On the instant that all was over," reported the New York *Times*, "these men leaped to their feet, the terrible tension ended, they shook hands, embraced each other and shouted in delight." We have no right to explore another man's feelings, or to say what should please him. Nobody then or since has said that Mr. Conant's emotions, whatever they may have been on that occasion, were irresponsible. Nor do I wish to use Mr. Conant or any other scientist, or administrator of the sciences, as a whipping-boy for his colleagues. Yet it is a fact that we cannot blink, that the Renaissance doctrine of the freedom of unlimited enquiry has had consequences for good and evil in the modern world. This doctrine has created our world; in so far as we are able to enjoy it we must credit unlimited enquiry with its material benefits. But its dangers are too notorious to need pointing out. An elusive *mystique* supports the general doctrine, which may be stated as follows: We must keep up the enquiry, come hell and high water.

One way to deal with this modern demi-religion is to say that a part of its "truth" must be suppressed. I am not ready to say that: I am only ready to point out that it is not suppression of *truth* to decline to commit wholesale slaughter even if we have the means of committing it beyond the reach of any known technique of the past. Is it suppression of truth to withhold from general use the means of exploiting a technique of slaughter? How might it be withheld, should we agree that it is both desirable and possible to do so? If we let government suppress it, government will in the long run suppress everything and everybody else—even democratic government. There is no just way of holding individuals and classes responsible for the moral temper of an entire civilization.

At this point the theologians and the humanists, the men of

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God and the men of man, appear—or at any rate formerly appeared. The Christian religion, in its various sects, has been blamed for its historic conservatism in refusing to sanction the advances of science as they were made. It is my impression that this supposedly Christian scepticism is Arabic in origin. It was the followers of Averroës in Europe who upheld the secret cult of natural knowledge against the Thomists and the Scotists, who more than the disciples of Roger Bacon stood for the diffusion of scientific enquiry. It is significant that the one science of the ancient world that impinged directly upon the daily lives of men—medicine—was held to be esoteric; the school of Hippocrates hid the secrets of the "art" lest the uninitiate abuse them and pervert them to the uses of witchcraft. This is not the place, and I am not competent enough, to follow up this line of speculation. I have wished only to observe that before the Christian dispensation, and well into it, the professors of special knowledge tried to be responsible for the public use of their techniques. We have not, so far as I know, a record of any of their reasons for what we should consider an illiberal suppression of truth. But if we think of the Greek world of thought as having lasted about nine hundred years, down to the great pupils of Plotinus—Iamblichus and Porphyrius—we may see in it a sense of the whole of life which must not be too quickly disturbed for the prosecution of special scientific interests. Nature was investigated, but it was a nature whose destiny in relation to a transcendental order was already understood. The classical insight into this relation was, as usual, recorded very early in a myth—that of the brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus—which now gives signs of recovering the authority which in the modern world it had yielded to myths that science had created about itself.

The responsibility of the scientist has not, I am sure, been defined by this digression: I have merely suggested that if anybody have a specific responsibility it may be the scientist himself. His myth of omnipotent rationality has worked certain wonders; but perhaps a little too rapidly. In Shelley's "Defense of Poetry" there is a sentence that persons who press the poet to legislate for us seldom quote: "Our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest." Shall we hold the scientists responsible for this? Have they made the child sick on green apples? I do not say that they have. But the child is sick. If the

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scientist is not responsible, are philosophers, statesmen, and poets, particularly poets, responsible?

Before I return to the poet's responsibility, I shall consider briefly the possible responsibility of other persons, excluding this time the scientists, about whom it has become evident that I know little; and I can scarcely do more than allude to the other intellectual classes whose special disciplines might conceivably implicate them in care for the public good. Of the philosophers I likewise speak with neither information nor knowledge. Like Mr. Santayana, I might somewhat presumptuously describe myself as "an ignorant man, almost a poet". But one gets strongly the impression that the classical metaphysical question—What is the nature of Being?—is semantically meaningless in our age, a mere historicism reserved for the frivolous occasions of lecture-room philosophy. Our going philosophy is reported to me as a curious, apostolic activity known as the "philosophy of science", an attempt to devise a language for all the sciences which through it would arrive at "unity". This is no doubt a laudable program, unity being usually better than disunity, unless the things to be joined do not like each other, or, again, unless the union take place at a level of abstraction at which certain things become excluded, such as human nature, of which the Nazi and the Stalinist unities for some reason took little account. But these are unities of the political order. What have the philosophers of unified science to do with them? They glanced at them, I believe, in resolutions passed at philosophical congresses, or in interviews for the press, where we were told that things will continue to go badly until men behave more rationally. Rationality usually turned out to be liberalism, or the doctrine that reason, conceived in instrumental terms, will eventually perfect us, even though our situation may be getting worse every day. This, it seems to me, was the contribution of certain philosophers to the recent war. Was the contribution responsible or irresponsible? Common sense ought to tell us that it was neither; and common sense tells us that not all philosophers talked this way. Everybody knows that modern philosophers, like their brother scientists, and not unlike their distant cousins the poets, are pursuing specialisms of various kinds; and from the point of view of these interests, the investigation of the nature of being, with the attendant pursuit of the love of wisdom, is no more within their purview than it is within mine. In his extra-laboratory

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pronouncements the merged philosopher-scientist sounds uncomfortably like his famous creation in allegorical fiction, the "man in the street"—the man without specialisms who used to sit on the cracker barrel, and who, in all ages, since hats were invented, has talked through his hat. Perhaps it was neither responsible nor irresponsible: it was merely dull to use the prestige of the philosophy of science as the stump from which to deliver commonplaces that were already at your and my command and that were doing us so little good that they might be suspected of having caused a part of our trouble. Reason—in the sense of moderate unbelief in difficult truths about human nature—and belief in the perfectibility of man-in-the-gross, were the great liberal dogmas which underlay much of our present trouble. The men in charge of nature never told me that I ought to try to perfect myself; that would be done for me by my not believing that I could do anything about it, by relying upon history to do it, by the invocation of ideals that many of us thought were democratic, by the resolutions of committees, conventions, and associations; and not least by affirmations of faith in the Common Man, a person with whom neither the philosopher-scientist nor I had even a speaking acquaintance. Will it not be borne in upon us in the next few years that Hitler and Stalin *are* the Common Man, and that one of the tasks of democracy is to allow as many men as possible to make themselves uncommon?

Thus it is my impression that belief in a false liberal democracy was not lacking among certain classes of "intellectuals" in the period between the wars: the period, in fact, in which Mr. MacLeish and Mr. Brooks said that we had staggered into a war that might have been prevented had the men of letters not given us such a grim view of modern man from their ivory towers, or simply refused to be concerned about him. If the more respectable "intellectuals" were not heeded in the call to democratic action, would the mere literary men have been heeded? Was the poet's prestige so great that his loss of democratic faith (assuming he had lost it) set so bad an example that it offset the testimony to the faith of even the statesman?

By the statesman one means, of course, the politician, though one would like to mean more, whether he carry the umbrella or the infectious smile, the swastika or the hammer-and-sickle. It would seem to have been the specific duty of the politician to have

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kept the faith and forestalled the rise of Nazism, though it was not generally supposed that it was up to him to do anything about Soviet Russia, which was tacitly assumed, if not by you and me, then by the leaves in Vallombrosa, to be on our side. My own disappointment in the politician is somewhat mitigated by the excuse which his failure provides for the poet: if he could not baulk the enemy, whom he directly confronted, what chance had the poet?—the poet, whose best weapon in history seems to have been Shelley's fleet of toy boats, each bearing a cargo of tracts, which he committed to the waters of Hyde Park.

I am sorry to sound frivolous; I confess that the political responsibility of poets bores me; I am discussing it because it irritates me more than it bores me. It irritates me because the poet has a great responsibility of his own: it is the responsibility to be a poet, to write poems, and not to gad about using the rumor of his verse, as I am now doing, as the excuse to appear on platforms and to view with alarm. I have a deep, unbecoming suspicion of such talking poets: whatever other desirable things they may believe in, they do not believe in poetry. They believe that poets should write tracts, or perhaps autobiographies; encourage the public, further this cause or that, good or bad, depending upon whose political ox is being gored.

My own political ox was at least driven into a fence-corner when Mr. Pound thumped his tub for the Axis; but what I cannot easily forgive him was thumping any tub at all—unless, as a private citizen, dissociated from the poet, he had decided to take political action at some modest level, such as giving his life for his country, where whatever he did would be as inconspicuous as his ejaculatory political philosophy demanded that it be. But on Radio Rome he appeared as Professor Ezra Pound, the great American Poet. Much the same can be said of Mr. MacLeish himself. It is irrelevant that I find his political principles (I distinguish his *principles* from his *views*), in so far as I understand them, more congenial than Mr. Pound's. The immediate *views* of these poets seem to me equally hortatory, quasi-lyrical, and ill-grounded. We might imagine for them a pleasant voyage in one of Percy Shelley's boats. If society indicted and condemned poets for the mixture and the misuse of two great modes of action, poetry and politics, we might have to indict Mr. Pound a second time, as it could conceivably be done in some Swiftian

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social order; and we should have in fairness to provide an adjoining cell for Mr. MacLeish.

The relation of poetry and of other high imaginative literature to social action was not sufficiently considered in the attacks and counter-attacks of the past ten years. No one knows precisely what the relation is; so I shall not try here to define it; though what I am about to say will imply certain assumptions. There is no doubt that poetry, even that of Mallarmé, has some effect upon conduct, in so far as it affects our emotions. To what extent is the poetry itself, even that of Mallarmé, an effect? The total complex of sensibility and thought, of belief and experience, in the society from which the poetry emerges, is the prime limiting factor that the poet must first of all be aware of; otherwise his language will lack primary reality, the nexus of thing and word. The failure to consider this primary reality produces willed poetry which usually ignores the human condition. The human condition must be faced and embodied in language before men in any age can envisage the possibility of action. To suggest that poets tell men in crisis what to do, to insist that *as poets* they acknowledge themselves legislators of the social order, is to ask them to shirk their specific responsibility, which is quite simply the reality of man's experience, not what his experience ought to be, in any age. *To whom* is the poet responsible? He is responsible to his *conscience,* in the French sense of the word: the joint action of knowledge and judgment. This conscience has long known a severe tradition of propriety in discerning the poet's particular kind of actuality. No crisis, however dire, should be allowed to convince us that the relation of the poet to his permanent reality can ever change. And thus the poet is not responsible to society for a version of what it thinks it is or what it wants. *For what* is the poet responsible? He is responsible for the virtue proper to him as poet, for his special *arête*: for the mastery of a disciplined language which will not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him by his awareness: he must hold, in Yeats' great phrase, "reality and justice in a single thought".

We have virtually turned the argument of the attack around upon itself. For it was an irresponsible demand to ask the poet to cease to be a poet and become the propagandist of a political ideal, even if he himself thought it a worthy ideal. If the report of the imagination on the realities of western culture in the past century

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was as depressing as the liberal mind said it was, would not the scientist, the philosopher, and the statesman have done well to study it? They might have got a clue to what was wrong. The decay of modern society is nowhere more conspicuous than in the loss of the arts of reading on the part of men of action. It was said at the beginning of the war that the traditions of modern literature represented by Proust had powerfully contributed to the collapse of Europe. It was not supposed that the collapse of Europe might have affected those traditions. If the politicians had been able to read Proust, or Joyce, or even Kafka, might they not have discerned more sharply what the trouble was, and done something to avert the collapse? I doubt it; but it makes as much sense as the argument that literature can be a cause of social decay. If, for example, Mr. Churchill had been able to quote the passage about Ciacco from the *Inferno,* or the second part of *The Waste Land,* instead of Arthur Hugh Clough, might we have hoped that men would now be closer to the reality out of which sound political aspiration must arise? I doubt it.

I leave this subject with the observation that poetry had to be attacked for not having done all that men had expected of it at the end of the nineteenth century. "The future of poetry is immense," said Matthew Arnold. It had to be immense because, for men like Arnold, everything else had failed. It was the new religion that was destined to be lost more quickly than the old. Poetry was to have saved us; it not only hadn't saved us by the end of the fourth decade of this century; it had only continued to be poetry which was little read. It had to be rejected. The primitive Athenians, at the Thargelian festival of Apollo, killed two human beings, burnt them, and cast their ashes into the sea. The men sacrificed were called *pharmakoi*: medicines. We have seen in our time a powerful attempt to purify ourselves of the knowledge of evil in man. Poetry is one of the sources of that knowledge. It is believed by some classical scholars that the savage ritual of the *pharmakoi* was brought to Athens by Barbarians. In historical times effigies made of dough were substituted for human beings.

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HERBERT GOLD

The Heart of the Artichoke

For Ed and Eileen Pols

MY FATHER, his horny hands black with sulphur, lit a cigar with a brief, modest, but spectacular one-handed gesture, his thumbnail crr-racking across the blue-headed kitchen match; when he described his first job in America, selling water to the men building the skyscrapers, teetering across the girders for fifteen cents a pail, green flecks fumed and sailed in his yellowish Tartar eyes; he peeled an artichoke with both hands simultaneously, the leaves flying toward his mouth, crossing at the napkin politely tucked at the master juggler's collar, until with a groan that was the trumpet of all satisfaction he attained the heart; he—but he was a man of capabilities, such feats apart.

As my mother said of him before they married, "He's well-off. Lots of personality." Older than the other women of her family, she used the word *well-off* in a primitive sense, to signify a general relationship with the world, not subtracting from the term all but its usual financial refrain: "Well-off very, he's a Buick. . . ." But she took the word from Aunt Sarah and Aunt Ethel; it's important that the vocabulary derives from economic security, to be extended outward only by an exceptional act of vitality. We, my brothers and I, could never eat enough for her. "Don't aggravate me. Eat. Eat," she would say.

"We already ate," I pointed out.

"But look at your father!"

He was eating. He ate with silent respect for food, a great deal, and not out of gluttony but with appreciation for his own labor in it. He knew the cost. In each spoonful of soup carried with music to his mouth I heard the winds whistling through the branches of the knaedloch trees; I saw the farmers' trucks, laden with chopped liver, musing in his crocodile eyes. "Eat," he pronounced at intervals, assuaging his love for us, "eat, eat."

We ate with a hunger in our bellies or in a filial loyalty while his was in his heart. Wearing a sheepskin coat which came as a

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gift from Mother and Pitkin's with the no-overhead, a silvery-pronged crate-hammer arming his back pocket, he climbed into the cab of his truck before dawn on market days, his wife's lips still parted against their single pillow while he checked off a list measured in gross over a breakfast of liver-and-onions with the other fruitmen in Solly's Market Tearoom. Perhaps at the earlier moment of supper, while we heedlessly digested, carloads of artichokes were coming in at the Food Terminal for the Thursday morning auction. He would get the best for Jack's Food & Vegetable: *The Best is the Best Buy.*

"Always," my mother piously breathed after him. She was proud of his slogan. "He made it up himself one day I remember it, he was by the cooler sorting asparagus. Lots of personality, loads," she informed Aunt Ethel and Aunt Sarah. "Eat," she said to me. "The nice ovenbaked potato."

I once asked the address of the poor hungry man in China who would be glad to finish my potato. "I'll send it to him with Mr. Kennedy the mailman," I suggested.

"I need your backtalk like I need my own brother Morton's agar-agar oil for his constipation, Henry Ford should take him. A whole tablespoon," she said. "I need it." Repenting of my sarcasm, I never believed in the poor hungry man, although I had recently become convinced of China at least in Geography.

My father had the knowledge of things—how to hoist an orange crate in a movement like a dance, how to tell an honest farmer from one who will hide his bad Pascal or Iceberg under bravado and a show of good ones, whom to trust in the fleet meetings of money at a fruit auction; this is already a great deal. Only once was he famously tricked, and by Uncle Morton, a man who installed automatic sprinkling pipes in his lawn ("For show! for the neighbors!" my mother communicated, outraged) but spent his Sundays tightening the faucets and complaining that his daughters filled the bathtub too full. (How clean can you get?)

Well, this brother-in-law, exalted by cupidity in one federally sponsored moment, suggested a partnership in the property in order to eliminate my father's competition at an auction: Should brothers, or almost-brothers, bid each other up like cats and dogs? No, the answer.

Afterwards, the deal secured, my father approached, tendering

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a hand-rolled cigar fraternally-in-law and saying, "Nu Mort, now about the partnership I think well we should let Henry there in the Republic Building, not that Hank from 105th Street, Henry a reliable man Hazelton Hotels uses him, draw up the papers—"

"Partners! hah!" Villainous Uncle Morton, performing for some secret inner croak of applause, permitted himself laughter at such innocence. "I'm partners me only with my wife"—and they haven't spoken since, nor have his daughters and I, cousins all.

But this was real estate, not food, which was the true sphere of my father's power; besides, such an error brings scope and savor to a legend of paternal infallibility. He could say, or let my mother say while above the broad cheekbones his eyes glittered like two long plump lima beans on sidewalk display in the sun: "The only time Jake got it but good, it was that time with the Woodward property, his own brother-in-law my brother, they run a house in the Heights and two cars—they need it?—a Buick sure and a Chevie for Yetta and the kids, may his breath turn sour in his old age—"

And his daughters' too. Amen.

As my mother talked my father measured us from under a vast biblical forehead which had sojourned in Kamenetz-Podolsk; it was a forehead that barely escaped the scars of reprisal for a tradesman's life given to a man who needed labor in the open air. He wrestled out this frozen compression, these knotty ravages, at the cost of an over-quickening in the work of the store, wielding cases with a plunging violence and mounting trucks like a burly fruitstore tomcat. Over-happiness too is a threat, Zarathustra said. The yellow flecks of his long narrow eyes fumed in contemplation. His sons were strange animals, born in America.

Question-shaped, my belly in advance of my thoughts, I had unnoticed by all but myself become skinny, pimply, shrewd, and poetic. I trained myself to wake at dawn, not for work like my father or to drink formula like my youngest brother, but because of the possibility that Pattie Donahue might feel my presence and stir in response to it; I believed in telepathy, tuning in on no messages because no one sent me any. I searched her face during Miss Baxter's Reading and The Library How To Use It for a sign of complicity (received no answer); I never spoke to her, for

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reasons of shyness and reasons of magic. She had aquarium eyes, profoundly green, profoundly empty, and a mouth like a two-cent Bull's Eye candy, and pale transparent fingers busy as fins. She powdered her nose in public, no longer picking it; she touched her ears to make sure of their presence on the beach of her head; patiently she plucked the angora from her mittens off the front of her cardigan, with this gesture of pale-boned fingers exploring herself and me. Together only abstractly, we were linked by both imagining atrocious ways to wish her well.

I let her swim again in my memory. She considered the future by judging it with the deliberate active forgetfulness of a fish floating asleep under ice: power through patience. Pattie Donahue wanted more than love, more than strength; she wanted mastery in denial, divinity in refusal of her own blood. Up the ladder to godhood or down to fishliness? That was her one risk in life. Seaweed is good for you! Lots of iodine! She had a repertory of head-tuckings, wiggles, peeps, curtseys, suckings, winks, herself charmed by herself; she was crippled for eternity, condemned to increase by parthenogenesis. She could not laugh with her body because her body could never move to another's, sway as it might under the seas of her ambition. Bemused, pious, she granted herself an adoring hand, fingers straddling to squeeze her sweater at the root of milk and psychology. Recall that princess who could undress before a slave because she did not regard him as a human being? We are all sometimes slaves.

Slavishly I kneeled for her chamois penwiper where it fell behind her desk in Music and Singing.

"Oh thank you," she said.

"Never mind, never mind"—me melting like March ice in a Spring pool of timidity and chagrin.

"Oh don't stop me, Daniel Berman. Thank you indeed. My mother says I need practice how to be gracious. Please let me do thank you. Oh thank you, Daniel Berman. . . ."

This too is a sort of excess!—and I let her take me under the green grasp of her greedy eyes. The fishy princess pouted, ducked, abstractly reached; I worshipped this body shivering and glistening under bracelets like scale. I saw her as age. Age during that time signifies secret power, secret passion, and the death which follows age is known only as the death which follows love. Girls, born queens, are always older than boys, ten-thousand-eyed

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drones, living for love, empty-headed, precariously housebroken. "Oh thank you really," said Princess Pattie Donahue, her royal sardine, queen of the hive.

She was gracious on me.

One day, the talk of the Horace Greeley junior high playground, a pride for events beyond me took her; she wore a shiny black brassiere which hung in lank splendor beneath the faintly distended yarn of her sweater and the morning's accretion of pink angora. She plucked, she pinched; in my poems I never found a rhyme for Donahue. Desire for a girl with nipples like tapioca spots! She went out, it was alleged, with high school seniors.

It was at this era of sudden sweat and pubic rancor that the issue of working in the store afternoons or at least Saturdays became prominent. "To help out," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To know what's what in life," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To find out it's like something to be a man," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To see how people—"

"To learn the value—"

"To help—"

"To learn—"

There always remained another word to propose on the subject. "I have homework to do?" I asked, making this a question because the whole world knew I did no homework.

"Your cousin Bernie works in his father's store," my mother said. "He's learning the value."

"Your cousin Irwin works in his father's store," my father said. "Very mature kit, grown-up. Knows what's what."

No fonder of my cousins, I began to work in the store. At first there were compensations besides learning the value and knowing what's what; for example, I quickly suspected the potentialities of stacking Jello. Its six delicious box colors made possible the development of a penchant toward baroque in counter displays. I gave over to fantasy in exercises of pure structure; I brought art to Dried Desserts (end of the first aisle), evolving from a gothic striving and simplicity to a rococo exuberance, raspberry mounting lemon in commercial embrace. The Jello man beamed and said I had talent. He promised me an autographed photograph

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of Jack Benny from his sample case, the signature printed as good as original, the *same identical thing*. I stood off, narrow-eyed, architectural, three loose boxes in each hand. While orange buttresses flew and lime vaulted over naves of cherry, my father grew impatient. "Is that all you got on your mind, the playboy?" It was not all, but he was right: there is a limit to what one can do with Jello. And what finally happened to my dream of a celestial engineering? Bananas were sliced into it.

I knew that my friends were playing touch football in the street or perhaps, if it were late afternoon, amorously lobbing rocks onto Pattie Donahue's front porch. Pity the man with an unemployed throwing-arm! Aproned and earth-bound despite my Buster Brown aviator shoes, I stood in exile among the creak of shopping baskets and a cash-register clang, such matters unmusical where a rumor of roller skates on a girl's sidewalk pledges passion eternal and a well-placed rock portends an invitation to Rosalie Fallon's second annual traditional Hallowe'en party; these are suburban verities which held even in the prehistory before Mayor Cassidy's first reign, when I began my studies of how to pee in an enamelled pot. A marksman now, I turned sullen despite my skill, sour as a strawberry plucked too early; my father knew their need to ripen wild in the sun, unfingered by ambitious farmwives. I was a bad crop, green through, lazy for spite.

"Stop slouching," my mother said. "Stand up like a mench. Bernie *likes* the store. He stays and works even when Uncle Abe says go home, here's a quarter."

I learned contempt for my cousins, the submissive ones, who worked so that they could spend dimes like grown-ups instead of nickels in the Chippewa Lake slot machines. No amount of labor could harden their gluey hands. Irwin had flat feet, a moustache at fourteen because his mother did not tell him to shave, the habit of standing too close when he talked, and, as luck would have it, a talent for projecting his bad breath with such accuracy that any customer's sales resistance must have died in the first whiff. Later he learned to brush his tongue, shave his armpits, sprinkle himself with Johnson's Baby Powder, and rinse his mouth with spearmint mouthwash. Anything for a client. He gave up his soul, a pulpy one at that, which resided in the crevices of his teeth.

Bernie, Narcissus Gaynesbargh the Go-getter, developed an artist's pure love for illness, hospitals, and operations. He saved up

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enough—"All by his lonesome," bragged Aunt Sarah—for an operation which joined his ears more cunningly to his head. "Clark Gable can let himself go, he's a big man already, but not my Bernie," his mother proudly recounted. "Today he looks a million—stand frontways, Bernie! And how tall is your Daniel?"

Bernie had enough left over in his account to have his piles removed during the after-Christmas slow spell. *Carpe Diem*: he obeyed our junior high motto, constantly improving himself, a medically-made man, an expert on vitamin pills, eye exercises, and local anesthesia. He was also judicially-made; let us not omit the subtle alterations in the orthography of his name. Imagine the legal nightmare in which a Ginsberg-into-Gaynesbargh signifies more rebirth than immolation! The suicide was a complete success. Neither his ears nor his ancestors stuck out, although the stitching showed.

"*They* will marry nice rich girls from New York City, you'll see," my mother threatened me. Later both took Marital Engineering courses, one at Miami University and the other at Cornell, and it paid, because Bernie married a nice rich shoe business from Hartford and Irwin married a wholesale Divan & Studio Couch, a steady thing.

"But," as my mother said, "you can't measure happiness in dollars and cents. There are things more important especially with taxes these days. A sweet little wife, a nice little family. . . ."

"Have a piece Sanders." Aunt Sarah consoled her with the Continental assortment. "I got it by Sanders Chocolates when I went downtown to look for my new Person Lamb yesterday. Purse-and-lamb, I mean. Who knows maybe I'll settle for a Shirt Beaver, the season's almost over."

Not even Aunt Sarah can distract my mother when philosophy comes over her. "You could marry in a low element, maybe he wouldn't really be rich only pretending, living high, that kind of a click—"

"My Irwin hm hm, you should know he sent me a this year's pillow direct from the factory to me," Aunt Sarah might remark. "He don't have to put birds in his vest, my Irwin."

"Don't tell me, I know," Mother groaned. "Some people are real type bigshots, some people have to make look big to themselves with escalator heels and Scotch shoelaces, who ever heard?"

"My Irwin—"

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"What, you crazy? He's a nice steady boy your Irwin, clean-cut, a neat dresser. I'm mentioning it so happens one of those fast clicks, oh, oh."

"Ho," breathed Aunt Sarah.

They communed in silence over the family shame. They clopped the bitter memory from their outraged palates. They drew the lesson from what befell poor Cousin Bessie, who returned from a vacation—she had a nice job with the government, too—with pierced ears and coral earrings, a pair of chartreuse silk slacks, and a new man to replace the one who broke his head. "My new husband," she announced, indicating a plump individual with oily sunburned pouches under his eyes, Novelty-style shoelaces, and a sky-blue Kalifornia Kravate with a silver-lightning pin, the tie tucked into a Hickock Kowboy-type belt: "Roland, he's in the wholesale business in Los Angeles."

"Wholesale what?" Mother had asked, suspicious already.

"Just wholesale," Cousin Bessie said equably. Roland smiled to show the gap in his teeth bridged by invisible platinum. His little woman spoke for him: "He has the biggest outlet in Los Angeles."

"Ellay," he corrected her.

Later, after Uncle Moish from Indian River Drive discovered that this Roland was a bad-type thief off the legit, not a dealer in factory-to-you eliminate-the-middleman low-costs, they helped Bessie out again. She promised to be more careful next season. She was pushing thirty-five, although the family loyally counted only the last twenty-seven of them; she had combed the summer-time mountains and the winter-time seaside since she buried Lester. Mother took three deep breaths and announced, addressing her in the ceremonial third person while Bessie wept wholesale tears: "Next time she should vacate a week ten days in Atlantic City on the Atlantic, the sun, the salt water taffy, she should meet a nice steady New York type fella, she still got her health why not? Knock on wood. Just he shouldn't have the biggest outlet in Ellay."

Still my cousins were generally nice, steady, and successful even at that early time. I was recalcitrant, a failure in affairs.

"The whole world knows. Aunt Ethel and Aunt Sarah know, it should happen to me I try to be a good mama to you. The whole city knows."

Aunt Sarah encouraged my mother in her own way. " '*Mama*,'

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my Bernie tell me,"—and her eyes moistened over such devotion —" 'Mama,' he says, 'you look like sugar in the urine again. What did I tell you about those two-dollar Sanders assortments?' . . . . So thoughtful," she concluded, folding her arms across a high stalwart bone of her *garment,* leaning back, and waiting for my mother to tell something good about me. I couldn't even read an oral thermometer. After a while she sighed for pity, yawned for contentment, and added soothingly, "Your Danny working nice in the store these days maybe? Just tell him about my Bernie, he'll learn, you got to encourage."

"I look in the looking glass I ask myself why, I got no answer. A son of mine, why? A thirteen-years-old lump," she encouraged.

It wasn't laziness. That's a maternal answer. I would have worked in other ways, and did; if I could have remained at some comprehensible task, delivering orders perhaps, building shelves, loading the truck, or manipulating the stock in the basement, I might have attained a fulfillment equal in its way to Cousin Bernie's avarice for operations. The constant pouring of commands from a triumphant father shivered and shattered my sense for work; he wanted me by his side, proud of an eldest son, any eldest son. For good reasons of his own—he had been poor, he wanted me to see what he had done for himself and for us all—he urged me to learn the pleasure of a direct delicious manipulation of money, its worn old touch of cloth, its warmth of hands and pockets, its smell of sex and work, its color of economy or death in our world, signed in those days by Andrew W. Mellon. "Here! it says right here. Read it yourself. That's the secretary of the treasurer of the United States of America, U. S. A., his own autograph."

"Oh for God's sake. Jake, you can notice such things?"—my mother discovering new depths, she a modest economist, my father not.

"Notice notice," he admitted virtuously. Money was poetry, a symbol of life and power on one side, economy and death for him with the White House on the other, but only a symbol—how could I understand such metaphysics, ungraduate-schooled in that epoch of despair with girls and ambitions of purity? My agile Tartar-eyed father made the distinction by enjoying both the earning and the spending, finding his truth higgledy-piggledy in an exploit of strapping a load-and-a-healthy-half on his 1928

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White Motors truck or in giving himself to a snack of artichoke with Kraft's dressing, the heart his end but the money-colored leaves loved for what they were.

He wanted me to clerk, to *wait on trade,* then, to be an aproned catalyst toward the final term. How could I take money from Mrs. Donahue, whose daughter no one but Tom Moss knew I loved, while Pattie herself teased her mouth with an end of lipstick without glancing at me in my feminizing wraparound? My languishing yip should have betrayed me: "That'll be just three sixty-five, please," recited as I had been taught. It did not; no one saw me. The money joined money in the new Serv-a-slip cash register. *O love me, Pattie! look!*—and I feared that she would. I gave the cash to Hannah, the cashier, my father's deputy while he bargained with the Wheaties jobber for bonus Eversharps and an electric fan-flame wood-glow fireplace.

"Okay, Little Jack, you're picking up now. I'll tell your pa. Just keep the hands out of the pockets when you're making a sale. Say thank you to the customer." Hannah had a tongue cracked and ridged, mounds at the meaty sides and fissures among the yellowish scale, betrothed to dyspepsia. These wounds came of a continual talking confused with a continual eating. No one knew a remedy. She suffered unsilently, chewing Baseball Gum. "I said take hands out of pockets that's a boy. I said say thank you to the nice customer."

"Thank you, Mrs. Donahue," I mumbled miserably.

I carried Mrs. Donahue's order to her Hudson. Pattie moved ahead, her rump twitching like a snapdragon delicately pinched. I fled as she fumbled with her purse for a tip. The next Monday, inspecting my approach from her station at the side entrance to Horace Greeley junior high, without taking her eyes off mine she bent significantly to whisper into her friend Rosalie Fallon's ear. To stifle their laughter the two of them made paws of their silly adored hands at their mouths. This gesture insured politeness and (reward for a suburban virtue) the secret renewal of laughter when the grocery boy had passed. Sober and unblinking, Pattie nonchalantly rubbed her edible kneecap.

"Don't call me Little Jack," I told Hannah once more without hope. "Call me my name."

"Okay. . . . Little Jack," she said, humorously chewing.

Sometimes I carried a book to work, wearing it piously between

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my shirt and my chest, and then hid with it and a cigarette in the basement among the cases of Libby's Whole Sliced Pineapple and Hinz-zuzz Pork and Beans with Tomato Sauce. The white-washed walls sweated; the storeroom smelled of dampness, rat poison, cardboard packing cases, and a broken bottle of soy sauce. Here I was happy, the complicated atmosphere making me dizzy as I perched corrupt with one of Andy's Wing butts on a peak of pineapple under the dusty 40-watt bulb. Sometimes I put down the Poe (I had memorized *Ulalume* without being able to pronounce it) and moodily considered my childhood, before Pattie Donahue and before my parents had decided I was a man, when I had sometimes visited this range of cans and bottles to leap like a goat among it in my innocence. I practiced a tragic sigh, inhaling soy.

Always my father roared down the stairway to discover me. "YOU THINK YOU CAN KID ME, HAH? The A & P can't even kid me, I got a list of your tricks—"

I stood up with no answer, understanding that he would forever find me, silent in my wished chagrin. I could not explain to him the disgrace of working in a store in a neighborhood where boys had important unexplainable things to do, secret clubs and fatal loafing, while their fathers managed offices for Standard Machines or handled law cases for insurance companies downtown. I wanted him to commute instead of work, like the others; I could not tell either of us the reason for my stubborn reluctance to follow him to the market, racy and challenging though it was. I felt a justice in his despair with me. A coward, I hid each time.

"Your mother says today you'll be good, I say I'll find you sneaking off with a book."

I studied his boots on the cement and deeply assented. He had looked in the backroom to see if I were filling orders, giving me the benefit of a doubt and profligate hope which is still my debt.

"Nu, what do you say for yourself? I'm going crazy upstairs, it's a big one-cent-sale, the Saturday help's no good these days. . . . Hah?"

I said nothing.

"Why not tell me another lie, you'll be good like you promised I should be happy?"

I stared, Poe sweaty in my hands.

"So why don't you at least say you had to go the toilet, the

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mensroom?"—a treble note of exasperation hidden in his bass, wanting an excuse for me, loving his oldest.

I refused this. I was over-moral for a moment, going on thirteen, as he was over-happy; I despised anything but extreme commitments, surrender to his world or defiance of it.

"What's the matter, you constipated? You got stomach trouble?"—pretending that I had given us this excuse, unable to bear our misery together.

He watched the tears silently fill my eyes.

He relented; he appealed to me, trying to preserve his anger by shouting; he betrayed his helplessness by heavily sitting down beside me on the canned pineapple. "What's the matter, you hungry, you want your mother should make you a tomato and balonny sandwich with Kraft's Miracle Whip dressing?"

"I want to go upstairs and help out," I whispered at last.

Reconciled, unable to preserve animus, he bumped against me up the narrow steps. Instead of letting me sink into the crowd of customers reaching with their lists and their clippings of advertisements at the counters, he ordered me to go to lunch with him, knowing that I liked this. To have the Business Men's special with Dad in a restaurant was one of the compensations; choosing food is the act of a god—only gods and business men don't have mothers to tell them what to eat, filling their plates with it. It was a pure joy although a bad restaurant; we had to go there because Guy Mallin owed my father two hundred dollars, which he never paid and we couldn't eat through by the time he left his wife and ran off to Montreal with Stella, the waitress, and a week's receipts. (When this happened Dad tried, although he knew little about the restaurant business, to help out poor Mrs. Mallin, who had no children but only a thyroid condition to give her an interest in life.) Both of us would have preferred an egg roll and hamburger steak at Louie's, the Chinaman across the street, and our unity on this—winking across the table as fast-talking Guy Mallin approached—cleared the hatred of civilizations between father and son. I should insist on this: the storm confined itself to its direct object, my laziness, rising like an East wind to its peak on the busy day, Saturday or before holidays, then falling away. "You learn with meet people," he only said. "You learn with know their ways."

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After we finished our lunch I hid in the basement of the store to read Edgar Allan Poe.

2

As the months went by, the ruses deepened and the anger swam like some exiled bull carp in the deepest pools of the natures of my mother, my father, and me. Pattie Donahue had definitively given up roller skating in the street, and not only on bricked Pittsburg Road but also on the mellifluous asphalt of Chesterton Avenue. We were freshmen in junior high, seventh graders learning dignity from a Social Dancing teacher added to the curriculum by the Board of Education which decided that Grace and Poise (formerly Comportment) were as essential as geography and algebra to the Young Men & Women of Tomorrow, be they bond salesmen like their fathers or *homemakers* like their mothers. The Real Estate Taxpayers League issued a protest against educational frills; pioneering virtues that made our country great, assessment already excessive, it argued. Artichokes, bulky and hard to handle, were coming into season again.

Shamefully I pretended to be sleeping Saturday mornings when my father had gotten up at three or earlier. Mother was more violent, my father more deeply hurt—the denial, after all, was of him. She nagged constantly; yet on Saturdays when I stayed motionless slugabed, her pride in sleep—"It's very healthy"—protected me there. Later, my father telephoning to ask if I had arisen yet, he fell silent before her report, pressing the receiver to his ear amid the mob of shoppers importunate about fork-tongued Hannah's dais, and he darkly said nothing while Mother repeated, infuriated with me but stubborn in her allegiance to health: "Let the kid sleep just one more morning, kids need sleep. It's good for them."

Having vacuumed, she herself got ready to go to the store for *relief*. Out of some relic of pride I could not bring myself to feign until she would safely leave me among my angry bedclothes in the occult reproach of a house. "I'm up," I fatally admitted. I reached for a paltry revenge in wearing yesterday's socks. She edified me in a steady torrent on the streetcar to the store:

"No good! big lump! lazy good-for-nothing! You're thirteen already and look at you!"

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"Twelve," I corrected her.

" 'Please Daddy I want to work in the store like a big man,' Bernie always says. Aunt Sarah says. Such a go-getter! But what do you say?—look ma the dog wet the rug I'm twelve years old. Aunt Sarah says I should stop aggravating myself. Please give a look my waricose weins from standing up." She had forgotten that the effect of threatening to telephone Aunt Sarah when I was *bad* had been dissipated years ago with the advent of Unlimited Calls. Sometimes I had even offered to dial the number for her.

"A big lump like you he should give me a rest, take the load off your feet Ma like Bernie, not trouble trouble all the time."

"Why is it you always say I'm thirteen when it's something you want me to do and you know I'm twelve?" I asked, a savant without rimless glasses: "And when I want to do something I can't because I'm not old enough, I'm only eleven? My birthday is July twentieth at six o'clock in the morning."

"I remember," she said morosely. "And a fine night I had with you in Mount Sinai all night too, they almost had to use force-its. Dr. Shapiro said my bones were so delicate close together. . . . Thirteen, going on now. Even Uncle Morton knows about you, I'm so ashamed in the family why I told Aunt Ethel I'll never hold my head high again, at least Morton he got daughters they keep themselves clean at least not so much aggravation, all right so worry a tiny bit they should marry nice, but not heartache a no-good like you day in day out—"

Outside the streetcar the first autumn leaves were burning in piles on the street, sending up an odor redolent of freedom in the open air. My friends flamboyantly loitered on the Saturday streets, chalk in their mouths, their hearts unfettered. Pattie Donahue was perhaps walking alone in Rocky River Park, just waiting for me telepathically to find her.

The store opened about us with the intense plushy smell of old vegetables. Hannah was comforting old Mrs. Simmons, a childless widow whose husband had been manager of the Guarantee Trust, Rocky River branch; she generally admitted herself among us with the distant face of someone who disliked the smell of the inside of her own nose, but now she claimed to have seen a spider in a hand of bananas. "It probably wasn't a deadly poisonous banana spider," Hannah said. "Did it have a lot of legs? Furry ones from Costo Rico?"

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"A South American banana spider! oh!" Mrs. Simmons, realizing that it was a foreign element, rolled her eyes in search of a pleasant place to faint.

"Probably not deadly poisonous, though. Probably just a sleepy little old banana spider from the deadly jungles of Hatey." Mrs. Simmons fainted. That is, considering her dignity and the aristocratic unpaid bills in the drawer with Hannah's sandwiches, she *swooned*. "Anyway no one else saw it, the thousand-legger bug, the horrible deadly spider," Hannah mused on, rubbing Mrs. Simmons' wrists without taking off her Ovaltine Birthstone & Goodluck Ring.

"Ouch, you're scratching," said Mrs. Simmons.

My father, harried but always expecting the best, greeted me with an order. Stack the oranges, wait on Mrs. Simmons, put on your apron, what's the matter with you? . . . . Could I confess the chief reason for my tardiness, a hope that telepathic pressure concentrated among my bedclothes might compel Mrs. Donahue to buy her Ohio State hothouse tomatoes and Swansdown ready-mix no-sift cake flour before my surrender to penance in a wrap-around? *Develop Your Will Increase Your Power. Sample Booklet Fool Your Friends. 25c Coin or Stamps.* No, I could not. My father's will developed, he spoke a language in which existed no vocabulary to explain that, among the people with whom he chose to bring me up, it was more important to run end in a pick-up touch football game, spinning craftily about the young trees planted by the Our Street Beautiful committee, than to fill orders in sour old orange crates on Saturday afternoons. We all paid, in our various ways, a price for those trees and for the privilege of overhead doors on our garages and colonial-style magazine racks for our Saturday Evening Posts. He did not draw the consequences of his ambition for me; if he judged our neighborhood to be better than that of his childhood, then our neighborhood would judge his world. In a develop-your-will (Fool Your Friends) like my father's the only lack was the will to find my will-less longing. He worked! Mother worked! Like dogs!—They were right, but they could not see through to my rightness, forgetting a child's hunger to belong. Ulalume might have been for the ages, but Rosalie Fallon and Pattie tongued their malicious pencils and wrote my fate in their Slam Books. He knew he was a foreigner, my father did; I had to discover it in pain, shame before my

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parents, and self-judging. "I earned my own living when I was thirteen, and proud of it," he had said.

"Your father earned his own living when he was twelve," Mother remarked contentedly in explanation, "and he is proud of it. *Proud* of it."

"Thirteen he said," I said.

"Proud he said," she said.

He studied me in sorrow and silence, figuring with his short black-nailed thick-knuckled hands reaching for the silvery crating hammer in his back pocket. I was just a kid. I even looked like him. Hannah said so. Even Guy Mallin said I was a chip off the. Hey kid? You want a Business Men's plate with chocolate ice cream instead of the green peas with butter sauce? It should be easy to figure. . . . "Gravy on that there ice cream haw-haw yessir, hey kid? Gravy!" Guy Mallin roared. "A real chip if I ever saw one, Jake. I'm telling you listen to me now. Your eyes. Your chin. His mother's, a sweet little woman you got there, nose. Yessir. Your hair. Off the old block there, Jake. Good material, hey? It won't be long before it's *Jake & Son,* what-do-you-say? I'm telling you now Jake you heard what I said."

"Maybe things are different these days," he told me. "You ain't the way I was."

My father had the gift of listening to the artichokes at the top of a load in such a way—they informed him in a language which only he and the artichokes spoke—that he always knew when their brothers at the bottom were defective, defeated, edged with rust or shriveled from a stingy soil. Silent in their hampers, they communicated by the violence of love, all knowing their role on this occasion as opportunities, each thick-leafed one, for a sociable debating between farmer and merchant, green, crisp, candid, and nutritive after a pleasant journeying into the hands of women. They accepted the gift of himself which my father made, their shoots curly for him, their unbaked hearts shy in a bra of ticklish felt. Buy us! sell us!—they asked nothing more. Artichokes understood my father, and his sympathy for vegetables arose to meet theirs for him. Devotion—he gave this freely. He accepted, too, being stuck with thorns.

Unfortunately I, even in those days, was not an artichoke—perhaps not so rewarding, my heart not luscious with a dab of miracle-whip, stunted in fact, even hornier, full of bad character

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and a brooding plant rust. "Lots of personality," my mother had said, feebly defending me when as a child I had refused to shell lima beans for the store with the rest of the family on Friday nights. "Everyone says he takes after your side, Jake. Ethel says, Sarah says."

"Since I was thirteen! I got scars on my back, the bucket cut me, the greenhorn I didn't get a pad cloth. Look at Irwin, look at Bernie born the same week like you in Mount Sinai, you was the first so I got your mother a semi-private. A healthy kid like you, he sleeps all morning Saturday."

"Since he was twelve years old a greenhorn," Mother mournfully intoned. "Who ever heard of it?"

Pattie Donahue plucked at her sweater and pouted with kiss-proof lipstick (maybe) over teeth lucky to serve her. Lewis Snyder, the sheik, told stories about Rosalie Fallon and Pattie. Tom Moss told me. "The liar," we agreed, ferociously believing him.

Such matters flowed in time; the store remained outside time, its claim ripening through the spines but as incredible to me as a heartless artichoke to my father. The store gulped me down. I evaded, I squirmed, I stubbornly bent, receded, and persisted like heartburn, taking all shapes but in fact knowing only itself, which has no shape and a mysterious matter.

"You don't want, what kind of a reason is that?" my mother demanded, fertile as Hera in argument. "No reason, that's what kind."

I couldn't explain to myself or to them, much less to Aunt Sarah or to Aunt Ethel, to Hannah, Guy Mallin, or Cousin Bernie the Smarty. Let him marry a nice rich girl from New York Queens in the clothing business, I don't care, I sacrilegiously insisted. My single purpose was love for Pattie Donahue, whose father carried a portfolio to work in his hairless pink little hands; she would love only the elaborate loungers, the conspicuous consumers—a little Veblenite she was! You Americans all long for the useless, the hymen no proper end; it feathers no beds, it fleshes no bellies—this Mother and Dad might have pointed out if they had argued their philosophy. I sensed, too, that my father's agility and strength and love moving among the objects all his in the store were a threat to me, the more dangerous because—one of his few fatal thoughts outside the moment—he was beginning to see

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Jack's Fruit & Vegetable in terms of immortality for both of us. He asked only a sign of recognition for this gift to me.

I refused his gift daily now. Even the Jello counter fell into ruins. My ultimate denial lay outside morality, essential to character. My father was over-happy, over-moral. I crouched like a troll under a mushroom in the cellar, a troll who read *Ulalume* and murmured, "Pattie Donahue!" with dilated eyes in the shadow of a shipment from Procter & Gamble. Poor Dad!

We can measure his desolation. He left his struggle and joyous head-on combat with farmers, jobbers, salesmen, Saturday help, policemen, wilting lettuce and pears which remained green until they rotted, competitors, the chain stores, the landlord, debtors, creditors, the delivery truck, the account books, the government, insects, rodents, spoilage, wastage, heat, cold, the margin of profit, draw items, push merchandise, merchandise which he could not get, premiums, samplers, one-cent giveaways, Christmas trees on January second and Easter candy in May, children who skated through a display of jars of olives (the olives lined up one by one in bottles shaped like a straw, optically illusive, expensive all the same), Mr. Jenkins who insisted on Aunt Mary's pancake mix and would not be content with Aunt Jemimah's or any other Aunt's because he wanted to honor in this way his poor dead old Aunt Mary his mother's sister, Mrs. Rawlings the klepto whose chauffeur dropped her off at the store every morning to slip a bottle of vanilla extract into her pink muff (her daughter paid, but we had to keep score), the charity ladies and the lottery girls, the kids selling advertisements in their parochial school bulletins, the beggars who claimed to have had a store just like his in Phoenix, Arizona, until they hit a run of bad luck back in '29 (he was unanimously elected to a directory circulated by a syndicate of beggars, Phoenix & Miami Beach Chapter), the faithful customers who tried to convert him to their religions, Mrs. Colonel Greenough who came with tears to tell him that her husband forbade her to shop at Jack's Fruit & Vegetable any longer because the colonel himself had given him three months to read a book on technocracy and he had not yet complied (she bought a farewell bouquet of cauliflower before she left), the high school teacher who wanted to pay an overdue bill in the privacy of her chamber, the judges asking support both moral and ah financial in the coming primaries, the tax collectors, the bill collectors, the

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garbage collectors, the health inspectors, the housing inspectors, the zoning inspectors, electricians, refrigerator repair men, insurance which only covered fires begun by safety matches when his fire had resulted from a cigar butt, illness among his clerks, jealousies, rivalries, romances, extended lunch hours, female troubles which (a gentleman) he could not publicly doubt, inventories, lentil soup in cans labelled liver pate, children who descended like locusts to remove all the tops from the Ralston boxes to send away as a mark of esteem for Tom Mix, the electric cash register playing Chopin in a short circuit, Hannah who had B. O., Andy who left his hair among the macaroons, Myrna who showed too much of her bosom in order to encourage Mr. Tramme to take an extra cantaloupe, and other problems which I'll not mention because I want to avoid making a list.

My father abandoned his direct response to these issues in order to *use psychology* on me. He appealed in subtle ways. He tried to *get me interested*. His Tartar eyes were made to squint for laughter and appetite, not cunning. My heart contracts with sadness for him now, sadness and regret. He came to me on the porch one Sunday afternoon, his great arms slack at his sides, saying, "Say!" in the way of a good fellow, and asked me to write a paragraph for his weekly advertisement in the neighborhood throwaway. I responded, too, working hard at a composition modelled on The Raven, sharpening three pencils into oblivion before I finished. Proudly I announced to Tom Moss the prospect of publication in the West Side Advertiser.

The work never appeared. Trochees had no place next to bargains in Crisco. The Crisco people paid half and supplied the engraving; the Spry people, not caught napping at the shortening, offered to pay sixty per cent and sent my mother a portable sunlamp for her sinuses. I wasn't even impregnated with Vitamin D or viosterol from Wisconsin, living by Poe and Pattie. Psychology failed; my father came as an alien to such maneuvres. Nevermore!

One day I sneaked out of the store at 4:30, made my own dinner of Laub's rye, Blue Moon pimento cheese with those taste-delightful little chopped-up pieces of real pimento, Krunchy peanut butter (kan't remember the brand), and Thursday's spoiled milk; then I went to an Edward G. Robinson with Tom Moss. The three of us stood off the coppers for a reel and a half, and when they finally got Edward G. the camera noticed a paper

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boat which sailed down the gutter in the symbolic rain. "Just like The Strange Case of Monsieur Whatsizname," I pedantically reminded Tom. We fought back our tears, magnificent to THE END, ate a dime's worth of evergreen mints, and went divvies on a Spicy Detective to read under the Jantzen's Swimsuit for That Lee-*uscious* Look billboard on the way home. I told him about Pattie and he told me about Rosalie Fallon. Our patient listening to each other was more than politesse; we learned through it although the histories remained classically similar, unmodified in months except for the time Rosalie kicked Tom in the shins when he complimented her by rubbing one of the last March snowballs in her face. He rolled up his pantleg to show me the wound once more. I accused him of preserving it with salt. He denied this. He accused me of envy. I lowered my eyes. Tom was a lady-killer, he was; I'll never understand how he did it.

"Well, goodnight Tom. Good luck with Rosalie."

"Well, goodnight Dan. I'll ask Lewis Snyder about Pattie. He took Virginia Thompson out on a date and maybe she knows something. He'll tell me if I ask him because I know something on him."

Goodnight. . . . Goodnight. . . . In that midworld of childish seriousness and the first adult frivolity of passion Tom and I needed the sense of banding together, our sufferings held in common while our sense of them remained untouchable, pariahs of glandular enthusiasm in a structure built of economy. He gave me the Spicy to hide in the garage. I had often dreamed of moving through an atmosphere of glue, invisibly held from my family's home in an empty night. Empty?—full of unknown excess. Now I whistled, leaving Tom Moss an hour before midnight, forgetting that I had last seen my parents seven hours earlier when my father had said, "Wait on trade!" and I had crept out the back door where Andy was boxing strawberries and beet greens were blackening in the sun.

The door to our house was locked. The windows were dark. There was no key under the mat. The crickets suddenly deafened me, like in the movies. I thought I knew, then, how Edward G. felt when the boys went over to the South Side mob, but found a basement window open, crawled through the coal chute, and significantly murmured Pattie's name out of the side of my mouth. Ulalume Donahue, Killer Berman's moll. . . . I'd have

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flipped a quarter with disdain except that it was too dark and I had no quarter. *Dad*! I thought. I worried about the gas stove upstairs. Maybe they were all dead and so I should bang on the door until they let me in to sleep in my own bed. What if there were rats in the basement? Big ones like in the Paris sewers with Gene Valgene? The washing machine opened its mouth at me in the darkness. *Mother*! I thought. If the water pipes broke and I got drowned they'd be sorry. They'd be sorry someday when I spit blood into my monogrammed handkerchief from sleeping all alone in a damp basement. They would be sorry. I was sorry. *Mother and Dad*! I thought.

Without taking off my shoes I slept on the extra kitchen table in the basement, amid dirty laundry (my pillow) and old hatreds (my dreams).

3

Even this passed. The next Saturday I was as faithful as Irwin, as true as Bernie with his eyes like spoiled oysters. I tasted during one evening the delights of approval, staying up with Mother and Dad while we discussed the day's business, counted the receipts, and discussed the pros and cons of tangle displays against neat pyramids of cans or fruit. I spoke for tangle displays, Mother for order; Dad listened to us both, sipping his tea with little Ahs through his lump of sugar, and reserved decision. He tried to lasso my head as he used to in a ring of cigar smoke. "It's too big," he complained. "Just like mine, a size seven seven-eights. So look who needs a hat! You want a Stetson?"

We had a long late supper, and before going to bed he slipped me three dollar bills in a secret conspiratorial gesture while Mother stacked the dishes.

"I saw! I saw!" she cried out, her eyes peeping bright in the mirror over the sink. We all giggled together.

Dad slapped her rump, yawned, and said, "Nothing like a good day's work, hey?" in his imitation of Guy Mallin.

"Jake, you crazy?" At peace with each other we parted. "And don't forget whose birthday is next month," my mother said: "Yours. You'll be thirteen, kiddel."

She had it right this time. It was a real truce; I knew its joys. But had anything been altered? As aphoristic Aunt Ethel might say, "A leopard coat can't change its spots."

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A few days afterward I received a letter. The envelope carried my name on the outside, together with the smart-alecky title *Master,* all printed in green ink. I studied it, marvelling, my first mail since the revolutionary discovery of INCREASE YOUR WILL POWER FOOL YOUR FRIENDS, and for that I had sent away a coupon and a quarter. I sniffed it. I licked the ink and made a smear of what our art teacher called *graded area.* I tasted my name in green, finding it more subtle than black but just as lucid. At last I decided to open the letter.

It was an invitation from Mr. B. Franklyn Wilkerson to go on a Nature Walk a week from Saturday. Mr. Wilkerson, who taught General Science to the seventh grade, had worked out a plan to augment his income during the summer vacation by conveying flower names and leaf shapes to suburban scholars. Small, swarthy, with three daughters and thin black hair artfully spaced and glued into place to cover his scalp, Mr. Wilkerson recited Science (general) with his neck petrified for fear a sudden breeze or emotion might betray his baldness. Zealous, he devoted himself to general science textbooks, turning the pages slowly to avoid drafts. A real scientist would have perforated the pages. He was but a general scientist, however, combining, as he thought, the virtues of the practical and the theoretical in Elevating the Young, an intellectual sort whose pink resentful mouth and clenched neck gave him the expression of someone who had swallowed a banana sideways.

The first walk, a free trial, would take place on a Saturday, and the Saturday before the Fourth, the third-busiest day of the year in the store. I decided not to go.

Tom Moss was going. Lewis Snyder, who had dates alone with girls, was going. I learned that several of them, including Rosalie Fallon and Pattie Donahue, would be botanically present. I decided to go.

We met, everyone carrying lunch but me, at eleven-thirty. Mother didn't know about it; I had run away from the store, taking my cap from under the cash register and, for some last scruple, telling Hannah to tell my father that I had gone. "Where?"—but I disappeared without answering, subtle as a hungry tomcat unable to hide its rut, sneaking around corners with its yellow eyes scheming. Lewis Snyder had a scout canteen filled with near-beer left over after repeal. I suspected him of planning to offer Pattie some.

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Pedantic, amorous, shifty-eyed general scientists, we followed Mr. Wilkerson into the Rocky River reservation. He wore a checkered golf cap, its band black with Sta-Neet, and showed how he had taught his wife to wrap his lunch—cellophane insulated the devilled eggs each from each. "Practical. Sanitary germ-free. Vitamins spoil in the open air," he advised us.

Tom Moss, my friend the sceptic, whispered to me that he thought it was supposed to be *good* for you to be out in the fresh-air, and then went to step on Rosalie Fallon's heels.

We penetrated the woods, already hungry. "Now right here on your left children we find an interesting phenomenon page one hundred and forty-eight in Brenner's figure sixteen that orange growth over there with the black spots now that's a wild spermaphore," Mr. Wilkerson remarked. "Ess. Pee. Ee. Arrh—"

"Looks like a toadstool to me," I said.

"Spermaphore. Silver spoons unreliable poor quality silver these days no workmanship. Damp places. Twenty-four on a picnic without a general scientist. Could have told them. Whole party dead in eight to ten hours. Horrible. Too bad. Ess, pee, ee—"

A voice occurred behind me, whispering, "Hello, Daniel Berman." It was Pattie. "Toadstools are very poisonous,"— she leaned sociably. "Do you like are you fond of mushrooms?"

I soared into paradise at her feet. "My mother cooks spermaphores with meat loaf," I said, "and stuffed peppers."

"Oh!"—a gasp of scandal. "She does not! You'll all be dead. . . . Does she?"

"Yes," I lied, death-defying—what could be a better beginning between lovers? All lies come true in a world of such supple twelve-year-old facts. It was cool here across the city from the store. Birds soon to be falsely named cocked their heads in the trees and lectured us. Some place customers swarmed amid the imperatives of telephones and the distance between my father and me widened past even the nine-month doubt separating an instant of giving from the birth of a son. Fatherhood, a metaphysical idea, was being taken from Dad as Mrs. Rawlings slipped her daily bottle of vanilla extract into her bosom, no one to distract her, and as Mr. Wilkerson bravely broke the perfidious spermaphore with a five-foot stick, no academician he, a man of general action in science. Rosalie Fallon gave her pressed-lip assent and moral outrage against hypocritical silver spoons while my thoughts fled back from the store to recall prepared speeches of passion for Miss

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Donahue, known by Killer Berman and Edward G. as Ulalume or The Lost Lenore.

"Oh-h-h," she was saying.

"Look the bug," I replied.

She pretended to be scared, not. I knew. Death and complicity —love is not a biological gesture in suburban children, O Mr. Wilkerson! I had forgotten my speeches and Ulalume.

Despite this meeting I again felt deserted, lunchless at lunchtime. Tom Moss pretended not to notice: excuse him his hunger. "Where's yours?" Pattie asked, her mouth full.

"Don't have any. My mother didn't. Not hungry anyway."

Girls always have enough to give. Suburban girls (economical) always have enough to invest. Sweetly she murmured, "You can have one of my bacon and tomato-motto sandwiches and a bite of cottage cheese with the canopy, please do." Smiling, licking her lipstick, her eyes calculating under the modest fluttering venereal lids, she whispered intimately: "And a cookie the one with the candied cherry in the middle, please do, really."

"Oh!" I protested.

Take take, my mother would have said.

"Really, I don't mind, please do," said dainty Miss Patricia Donahue.

I did.

Later, when we bid farewell to sporting, big-toothed, intellectual (generally scientific) Mr. Wilkerson, and thanked him for a lovely nice afternoon, and promised to ask our parents to fork over five smackeroos for a Program of Nature Walks, Pattie Donahue allowed it to be known that I was walking her home. Under the circumstances even Lewis Snyder had to count it a date with a girl alone; the evidence whelmed, overwhelmed. I obeyed the protocol. We had a coke and then an ice cream stick. That Snyder must have been eating his heart out, at least aggravated. All right then—I soliloquied with Tom Moss *qua* Conscience & Scorekeeper—half-credit then for a daytime date.

"Did you get a free one?" I asked.

She read her ice cream stick. "No," she said.

"Neither did I. Don't believe in luck anyway"—and I expounded my philosophy of will power concentrate your way to fame and/or fortune. I tried to recite *Ulalume* but forgot it.

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My mother's arches were hurting in her Enna Jetticks, but she avoided my father so that he would not order her home. Andy was making off to the vegetable cooler with a bagful of macaroons. Basketwood splintered under orders; customers fidgeted untended; my father wiped his forehead with a paper towel from the pine forests of Maine, leaving crumbs of lint, and mourned me.

"I never knew you were so smart," said Pattie Donahue.

We had fallen silent, sitting on the front steps of her house in the shadow of a bush where her mother could not see us. Up the street someone was hosing his car, an incontinent sound, in preparation for a Fourth of July trip. The afternoon was over. Pattie Donahue, an economical creature, an Indian giver, took back her gift in a way which expressed her genius. Business acumen. Operating costs and turnover. Appraising me with her turtle-round eyes, shrewd to calculate the value of an investment, she first created a bear market by sighing Ohh, rustling her dress, and accidentally touching my arm with her transparent turquoise-veined hands. Cologned and dusted with powder, she breathed on me.

"Yes!" I spilled out, naked in summer smells. "Do you like me, Pattie? I like you."

"Sure I like you"—disappointment and a pout that it had been so easy. Even economy becomes sport with such a housekeeper. "Sure I like you but you're too fat."

"Fat?" I repeated stupidly.

Her laughter tinkled in the July calm by the watered bush. "Fat I mean skinny. I mean you're just a *grocery* boy, you. You just grub around a certain store I could name all the Saturdays *I* ever heard about, except I suppose today—"

She was a sly old creature, that Pattie Donahue. The lips: *grocery boy*. The frozen iris: the same. Her laughter caroled forth, free, enterprising, resolute, the investment paying off in a Saturday afternoon dividend of power. Not all men are men, her laughter told her. This is a profit forever, my face told her.

"Oh but—oh but—oh but—" I said.

She put her little hand to her mouth and delicately closed it. Tee-hee. She looked at me, unblinking. My father, knowing he was a foreigner, could have accepted this in the perspective of

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history. I had to discover a fact without a past; it leapt out at me like some fierce fish from the glittering shale of Pattie Donahue's economical eyes.

I stood up. "Thank you for the sandwich and the cookie," I said. (The cookie with a preserved cherry on it.)

"Oh me no," she said.

"I was hungry."

"Oh you're welcome really," she said. "Thank you for the coke. Thank you for the ice cream."

"Goodbye, Pattie."

"It was nice, Daniel Berman," she said, "truly very nice."

4

I prowled, growing up fast that afternoon. I climbed a fat hump of a mailbox for packages and, my hands hanging in front, or my elbows on my knees and my fists in my cheeks, I watched the traffic on Parkside Boulevard. I did not choose the sentimental places, the tree by the lake, the woods where the river on which we skated in winter spread out like a sheet. I began to understand how the lost Lenore really got mislaid, without a dark conversational bird, without a tomb, without even a long metrical sigh. A heavy July sky lowered and thickened above me. I perched on the box like an animal in a dream.

But I was no animal in no dream. I was wide-awake, me, itchy, straddling a mailbox. Once someone mailed a book between my legs. I did not stop to wonder whether it were some quaint and curious volume, this being already forgotten lore. I studied the houses squatting like fat-necked bullfrogs along the boulevard, puzzled over the nay-saying mouths and step of the emerging strollers, celebrated and grieved for the crystallizing structure of my judgment (my *complexes*), no longer contained by sad and pretty words—grieved but did not cry.

Long after dark I finally went home. My parents were in the kitchen, talking in low voices, the relieved hawing of Saturday nights absent today. Entering at the street, I went directly to my room and lay down on the bed. I made none of the dramatic flourishes of locking the door or pushing the footstool in front of it.

"Daniel!"

Doltish, I wondered if this were what it felt like to be an adult.

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It was true that for weeks I had been awakening mornings with my bite clamped, my jaw aching, and my tongue plunged against my teeth. Was that the seeding for Pattie Donahue's educational crop? her economy predicted by my extravagance in sleep?

"Daniel!"—Mother's voice. I went. Mother stood by the kitchen table. Dad sat without looking at me, his head lowered, his hands about a bowl of soup. "You should come when I called you," she said.

"I did come."

"When I called you I said. Not whenever you please." She looked at my father and waited for him to speak. He did not. We all waited for him, the challenged one, amid the summer smell of flypaper in the kitchen and the buzzing of the wily flies.

Resentfully I broke the stillness: "I went on a naturewalk."

"What?—what?"

"I learned what's a toadstool and the names of birds. A naturewalk. Mr. Wilkerson general science from junior high, he—"

"And what about Mr. and Mrs. Slave-their-head-off, I suppose your parents by the store?" my mother asked. The sarcasm gave me hope; it was, after all, only dialectic again. How soon hope returns! We dwell in it even after the exile to which Pattie Donahue's laughter and nibbling teeth send us.

Turning to my father, whose head bent over the table in a way I only remembered afterward—his brother had died and Mother said he was crying because he was sad and I didn't believe her because daddies don't cry—I appealed to him with a manly challenge: "Almost everyone I know went on the naturewalk."

He did not yet look up.

"It's educational. Mr. Wilkerson says. Tom Moss was there. Almost everyone in our grade Seven-B Seven-A was there—"

"Lookit my waricose from standing up all day working like a horse eating my heart out," Mother said. "You should take a load off my feet, not I should carry you like a baby you're going on fourteen."

"Thirteen," I said.

"Going on anyway," she insisted, "*going* on. That's what it means. Big lummox. Look at my waricose go on look lookit."

She could not know—my cruelty at twelve years, soon thirteen!—that my only concern was for surgery on the distended veins, as other women had, instead of wearing the lumpy corset

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that bulged about her calves under webbed brown stockings. My garment, she called it. Like taxes, Jake says. Teeth too, O! Sarah had the same trouble after Bernie and she took calcium. You ask me I think better injections in the arm, injections.

Dad listened watchfully over the soup in the evening heat. He hunched and studied vegetables in the bowl.

See how I admit the two of them to paper. Put my refusal of their world, which was their deepest gift to me, beside a son's longed-for and imagined love for his parents. Let me call myself a liar, but don't you be quick to do it. "Want to playboy around all your life dreaming smoke in the head?" my father used to ask me, and yet he loved me despite the law that we cannot love someone who refuses our gifts. I did not see the power and light of his world, in which the four causes were felt in action with my mother, vegetables, and the Saturday specials; I had looked for light and power in Pattie and Poe while all the Aristotelian potencies and more lay waiting for me with the combustible garbage swept into the backyard at closing time each evening. The backroom, emptied and cleaned, was filled and emptied of carrot tops, beet greens, and the furry blue glow of spoiled oranges. I stalled; my father waited. I looked; my father watched.

A week earlier I had overheard Mother murmuring into the telephone, "So how's your Bernie? My Daniel shouldn't be better, he got a all-A report card and with a B plus in gymnistics, he gained two pounds by the scale but he's full of complexes, still a heart-ache in the store. . . . Yah. . . . I read in the paper it's complexes, Jake says he'll grow out. . . ."

But only the complexes kept growing out. It's because I really like my parents that it costs me so much to speak kindly of them. I remember how my father offered me his entire world and I threw it in his face like a rotten orange because he left out one little lump of an Atlantis, my own world.

"Listen to your father he's talking," my mother said. He had not yet spoken, but she knew him well and knew he now would. "You take his fifteen cents for a movie, don't you? Listen to your father."

Still sitting in his washed-out shirt crusted with salt under the armpits, in his old blue serge work pants, once dress-up with the sharpy stripe down the legs, more generous than fathers have

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a right to be, he tried to help me expiate my sin in a ritual of reprimand. No ceremony could heal him this time, but he waited. This came before the beginning: "At your age I was a man," he said.

He was right.

He swayed over the soup, food breathing back into his body the prayers he had forgotten in leaving his own father. His swaying shoulders heavily sloped and remembered. His father had forbidden him to go to godless America, better to die than to be unfaithful. This too he had forgotten, his father struck down by a Cossack's rifle, but the chant in his voice and the dance of his shoulders remembered.

"Look at you"—he could not. "Are you a man?"

No. Right again.

"A playboy. A nature-walker. A eater of ice cream."

All true. I still like ice cream, especially with Hershey's chocolate syrup. He taught me quality in food, my father. I waited for him to force me to make myself what we both agreed I should be; no ceremony could compel it though only ceremony could confirm it. Still I had to choose. Untheological, without brand names, we improvised ritual.

"A lollypop!" my mother shrilled, thinking she was on her husband's side. Here she was wrong. I was not a lollypop.

"Let me tell it, Rose," my father said softly, as if this were an incident on their trip to South Haven. "It's my turn to tell it, Rose."

"I don't care"—me turning in my pointed shoes perforated for ventilation and sweet beauty's sake under the eyes of Pattie. I mourned her now, blaming my birth. "I don't care about you." I lowered my gaze to my father's stubby foreign feet in steel-backed boots. "None of the kids have to do it. I don't care about you and your store."

He needed an instant for this. I gave it to him overflowing. "And—your—store."

His hand floated up like a speck fuming on the eyes; his fist crashed down on the enamelled table like the plunging claw of a crate-hammer. "Oh! Oh!"—Mother. Soup splashed out on his pants and ran weeping with little red carrot eyes.

His gaze was prophetic in mine. "*Some kits help out in the store,*" he said.

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"We were practically supposed to go," I said, neither retreating nor regretting, gaining time and learning patience. "Mr. Wilkerson is a teacher."

"*Some kits remember their father and mother.*"

Everyone knows where it hurts when you begin to cry—that place at the back of the throat. Pins jabbed under my eyelids. My palate ached. The tears hurt most in that instant before they break out. . . . And then I imagined cologned Pattie's cool laughter at my father's pronunciation of the *d* in *kits* ("—remember their father and mother"), and then drunk with the idea of the murder of someone I loved, my belly awash at the thought, I screamed him to his feet:

"I won't, I *won't* work in your store. I don't want it. It's not my life. I hate it. I hate it!"

He stood huge over me, smelling of leafy vegetables and sweat, smelling of his strength and his terror because he would have to beat me. This is the reek of power, what the men at the Food Terminal understood when Ollie the Agent tried to shake down him first of the West Side men. . . .The opponents were uneven. He had wise muscles, protected by years of work and good eating, the skills of use, the satisfactions of his time of life. He had three sons, only one of those baby brothers of mine lying awake to listen. His swaying body knew it loved me as his father had loved him, the woman carrying her child on a belly or breast, the man taking his son only at the eye or the fist. There must have been a great satisfaction in his fear and love at that moment.

My sole weapon was exactly my dissatisfaction. My father's arms swam with veins among the curled oily hairs on his light bluish freckled flesh. No bow-straight shoulders like Atlas the World's Most Perfect Develop It! No Culver Academy athlete calling for Pattie Donahue in his uniform at Christmastime! It was a body which had worked well and been used with pleasure, a happy body, soup on the pants, making its own purpose and content with this.

Mine, as I have said: discontented. I looked for a use for it. I said:

"And you and your grocery boys and everyone! *I hate you!*"

Mother was crying and stacking the dishes in the sink when his open hand—generous! open!—struck my shoulder. I flew back and then up at him, slipping past his collar rough as a dog's

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tongue. Mother screamed. I climbed him, flailing; he was planted on the floor and he rocked under my weight for a moment, both of us silently straining toward each other and apart, our sweat pouring together while Mother screamed on and on—the malignant smell of hate and fear becoming the myrrh of two men fighting, the sweet cunning of love and death. I clung to his great neck to strangle it. His beard scratched my arms. He hugged my ribs, forcing them up—cracking!—pushing my hair out, lengthening my bones, driving my voice deep. Savagely he told me his life, wringing my childhood from me. I took this after his long day and had nothing to give in return but my unfleshed arms roped about his neck. We embraced like this.

The broken blood fled for a window into my mouth. I felt myself fainting.

Abruptly I lunged down, perhaps permitted to beg free. His weighty old-country strength: my agile sporting slyness: as he glanced for pity at my mother I threw myself like a pole against his knees in a playground stunt performed without thinking. The trick uprooted his legs; he crashed; his forehead above the unsurprised Tartar eyes hit my mother's foot when he fell.

He sat up and started to his feet as she held him. I could not breathe, my chest frozen. I turned from his sprawling. I let him hear me choke and then ran to my room. Yes, I had wanted to win, but now, fatalistic, in an instant guessing ahead, I made the highest demand on a father: that he know he had beaten me too, only because he had let it happen.

"What's happening to us all?"—those first tears of old age. "What's happening to us?" Dad was crying in the bathroom with the door shut and the water running in the sink so that no one would hear an old man with an ingrate son. He had locked Mother out, who was dry-eyed now, figuring.

If I am bereaved of my sons, the first Jacob said, *then am I bereaved.* To fight back was all I needed; he had given too much. Economy in Pattie! my father a spendthrift!—such knowledge comes late to me now.

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ST.-JOHN PERSE

Vents[1]

Chant I

1

C'étaient de très grands vents sur toutes faces de ce monde,
De très grands vents en liesse par le monde, qui n'avaient d'aire ni de gîte,
Qui n'avaient garde ni mesure, et nous laissaient, hommes de paille,
En l'an de paille sur leur erre. . . . Ah! oui, de très grands vents sur toutes faces de vivants!

Flairant la pourpre, le cilice, flairant l'ivoire et le tesson, flairant le monde entier des choses,
Et qui couraient à leurs offices sur nos plus grands versets d'athlètes, de poètes,
C'étaient de très grands vents en quête sur toutes pistes de ce monde,
Sur toutes choses périssables, sur toutes choses saisissables, parmi le monde entier des choses. . . .

Et d'éventer l'usure et la sécheresse au coeur des hommes investis,
Voici qu'ils produisaient ce goût de paille et d'aromates, sur toutes places de nos villes,
Comme au soulèvement des grandes dalles publiques. Et le cœur nous levait
Aux bouches mortes des Offices. Et le dieu refluait des grands ouvrages de l'esprit.

Car tout un siècle s'ébruitait dans la sécheresse de

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translated by
HUGH CHISHOLM

Winds

Canto I

1

These were very great winds over all the faces of this world,
Very great winds rejoicing over the world, having nor eyrie nor resting-place,
Having nor care nor caution, and leaving us, in their wake,
Men of straw in the year of straw . . . Ah, yes, very great winds over all the faces of the living!

Scenting out the purple, the hair-cloth, scenting out the ivory and the potsherd, scenting out the entire world of things,
And hurrying to their labors along our greatest verses of athletes, of poets,
These were very great winds questing over all the trails of this world,
Over all things perishable, over all things graspable, throughout the entire world of things. . .

And having exposed to the air the attrition and drought in the heart of men in office,
Behold, they produced this taste of straw and spices, in all the squares of our cities,
As it is when the great public slabs are lifted up. And our gorge rose
Before the blind archways of the Offices. And divinity ebbed from the great works of the spirit.

For a whole century was rustling in the dry sound

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sa paille, parmi d'étranges désinences: à bout de cosses, de siliques, à bout de choses frémissantes,

Comme un grand arbre sous ses hardes et ses haillons de l'autre hiver, portant livrée de l'année morte;

Comme un grand arbre tressaillant dans ses crécelles de bois mort et ses corolles de terre cuite—

Très grand arbre mendiant qui a fripé son patrimoine, face brûlée d'amour et de violence où le désir encore va chanter.

« O toi, désir, qui vas chanter . . . » Et ne voilà-t-il pas déjà toute ma page elle-même bruissante,

Comme ce grand arbre de magie sous sa pouillerie d'hiver: vain de son lot d'icones, de fétiches,

Berçant dépouilles et spectres de locustes; léguant, liant au vent du ciel filiales d'ailes et d'essaims, lais et relais du plus haut verbe—

Ha! très grand arbre du language peuplé d'oracles, de maximes et murmurant murmure d'aveugle-né dans les quinconces du savoir. . . .

2

« O vous que rafraîchit l'orage. . . . Fraîcheur et gage de fraîcheur. . . . » Le Narrateur monte aux remparts. Et le Vent avec lui. Comme un Shaman sous ses bracelets de fer:

Vêtu pour l'aspersion du sang nouveau—la lourde robe bleu de nuit, rubans de faille cramoisie, et la mante à longs plis à bout de doigts pesée.

Il a mangé le riz des morts; dans leurs suaires de coton il s'est taillé droit d'usager. Mais sa parole est aux vivants; ses mains aux vasques du futur.

Et sa parole nous est plus fraîche que l'eau neuve. Fraîcheur et gage de fraîcheur. . . « O vous que rafraîchit l'orage. . . »

(Et qui donc ne romprait, du talon ne romprait l'enchaînement du chant?) Se hâter, se hâter! Parole de vivant!

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of its straw, amid strange desinences at the tips of husks of pods, at the tips of trembling things,

Like a great tree in its rags and remnants of last winter, wearing the livery of the dead year,

Like a great tree shuddering in its rattles of dead wood and its corollas of baked clay—

Very great mendicant tree, its patrimony squandered, its countenance seared by love and violence whereon desire will sing again.

"Oh, thou, desire, who art about to sing. . ." And does not my whole page itself already rustle,

Like that great magical tree in its winter squalor, proud of its portion of icons and fetishes,

Cradling the shells and spectres of locusts; bequeathing, relaying to the wind of heaven affiliations of wings and swarmings, tide marks of the loftiest Word—

Ah! very great tree of language, peopled with oracles and maxims, and murmuring the murmur of one born blind among the quincunxes of knowledge. . .

2

"Oh, you, whom the storm refreshes. . . Freshness and promise of freshness. . ." The Narrator mounts the ramparts. And the Wind with him. Like a Shaman in his bracelets of iron:

Robed for the sprinkling of new blood—the heavy, night-blue robe, ribbons of corded crimson silk, and the cloak with long folds weighted down at the finger-tips.

He has eaten of the rice of the dead; from their cotton shrouds he has fashioned for himself the right of usage. But his word is for the living, his hands for the fountains of the future.

And to us his word is fresher than new water. Freshness and promise of freshness. . . "Oh, you, whom the storm refreshes. . ."

(And who now would not break, with the stamp of his heel would not break the chain of the song?) Make haste, make haste! Cry of the living!

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Le Narrateur monte aux remparts dans la fraîcheur des ruines et gravats. La face peinte pour l'amour comme aux fêtes du vin. . . « Et vous avez si peu de temps pour naître à cet instant! »

Jadis, l'esprit du dieu se reflétait dans les foies d'aigles entr'ouverts, comme aux ouvrages de fer du forgeron, et la divinité de toutes parts assiégeait l'aube des vivants.

Divination par l'entraille et le souffle et la palpitation du souffle! Divination par l'eau du ciel et l'ordalie des fleuves. . .

Et de tels rites furent favorables. J'en userai. Faveur du dieu sur mon poème! Et qu'elle ne vienne à lui manquer!

« Favorisé du songe favorable » fut l'expression choisie pour exalter la condition du sage. Et le poète encore trouve recours dans son poème,

Reconnaissant pour excellente cette mantique du poème, et tout ce qu'un homme entend aux approches du soir;

Ou bien un homme s'approchant des grandes cérémonies majeures où l'on immole un cheval noir.— « Parler en maître, dit l'Ecoutant. »

3

C'étaient de très grandes forces en croissance sur toutes pistes de ce monde, et qui prenaient source plus haute qu'en nos chants, en lieu d'insulte et de discorde;

Qui se donnaient licence par le monde — ô monde entier des choses — et qui vivaient aux crêtes du futur comme aux versants de glaise du potier. . .

Au chant des hautes narrations du large, elles promenaient leur goût d'enchères, de faillites; elles disposaient, sur toutes grèves, des grands désastres intellectuels,

Et sur les pas précipités du soir, parmi les pires désordres de l'esprit, elles instituaient un nouveau style de grandeur où se haussaient nos actes à venir;

Ou disputant, aux îles lointaines, des chances du divin, elles élevaient sur les hauteurs une querelle d'Esséniens où nous n'avions accès. . .

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The Narrator mounts the ramparts in the freshness of ruins and rubble. His face painted for love as at wine feasts. . . "And you have so little time to be born to this instant!"

Of old, the spirit of the god was reflected in the livers of eagles laid open, as in the blacksmith's wrought-iron, and from all sides divinity besieged the dawn of the living.

Divination by entrails and breath and palpitations of breath. Divination by rain and the ordeal of the rivers. . .

And such rites were favorable. I shall make use of them. Favor of the god on my poem! And never from my poem be it withdrawn!

"Favored by the favorable dream" was the phrase chosen to exalt the condition of the sage. And once again the poet receives grace from his poem,

Recognizing as excellent the mantic power of the poem, and all that a man may hear at the approach of night;

Or else a man approaching the great master ceremonies where a black horse is sacrificed.—"Speak as a Master, says the Listener."

3

These were very great forces increasing over all the trails of this world, rising from sources higher than our songs, from heights of insult and discord;

Giving themselves license throughout the world—oh entire world of things—and living on the crests of the future as though on the clay slopes of the potter. . .

To the chant of the lofty narratives of space, they aired their taste for auctions and bankruptcies; on all shores they rejoiced in the great intellectual disasters,

And following in the hurried footsteps of the night, amidst the spirit's worst disorders, they instituted a new style of grandeur to which our future acts must rise;

Or discussing, on distant isles, the chances of the divine, they raised to the heights an Essenian dispute to which we had no access. . .

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Par elles prospéraient l'erreur et le prodige, et la sauterelle verte du sophisme; les virulences de l'esprit aux abords des salines et la fraîcheur de l'érotisme à l'entrée des forêts;

Par elles l'impatience aux rives feintes des Mers mortes, aux cimes peintes de vigognes, et sur toutes landes de merveille où s'assemblent les fables, les grandes aberrations du siècle. . .

Elles infestaient d'idées nouvelles la laine noire des typhons, le ciel bas où voyagent les beaux édits de proscription,

Et propageant sur tous les sables la salicorne du désir, elles promettaient semence et sève de croissance comme délice de cubèbe et de giroflier,

Elles promettaient murmure et chant d'hommes vivants, non ce murmure de sécheresse dont nous avons déjà parlé.

Achève, Narrateur! . . . Elles sifflaient aux portes des Curies. Elles couchaient les dieux de pierre sur leur face, le baptistère sous l'ortie, et sous la jungle le Bayon.

Elles libéraient la source sous la ronce et le pavé des Rois — dans les patios des Cours de Comptes et dans les Jeux de Paume, dans les ruelles jonchées d'estampes, d'incunables et de lettres de femmes.

Elles épousaient toute colère de la pierre et toute querelle de la flamme; avec la foule s'engouffraient dans les grands songes bénévoles, et jusqu'aux Cirques des faubourgs, pour l'explosion de la plus haute tente et son échevèlement de fille, de Ménade, dans un envol de toiles et d'agrès. . .

Elles s'en allaient où vont les hommes sans naissance et les cadets sans majorat, avec les filles de licence et les filles d'Église, sur les Mers catholiques couleur de casques, de rapières et de veilles châsses à reliques,

Et s'attachant aux pas du Pâtre, du Poète, elles s'annexaient en cours de route la mouette mauve du Mormon, l'abeille sauvage du désert et les migrations d'insectes sur les mers, comme fumées de choses errantes prêtant visière et ciel de lit aux songeries des femmes sur la côte.

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Through them error and wonder prospered, and the green locust of sophistry; virulences of the spirit at the edges of salt-flats, and the freshness of erotism at the entrances to forests;

Through them impatience on the simulated shores of dead seas, on the peaks streaked with vicunas, and on all the moors of wonder where gather the fables and the great aberrations of the century. . .

They infested with new ideas the black wool of typhoons, the low sky where travel the beautiful edicts of proscription,

And propagating the saltwort of desire over all the sands, they promised seed and sap of growth as a delight of cubeba and clove,

They promised murmur and chant of living men, not this dry murmuring of which we have already spoken.

Tell on to the end, Narrator! . . . They whistled at the doors of the Curias. They laid the stone gods on their faces, the baptistery beneath the nettles, the pagoda beneath the jungle.

They liberated the living spring from under the bramble and the pavement of Kings—in the patios of Cours de Comptes and in the Jeux de Paume, in the alleys strewn with engravings, incunabula and letters from women.

They espoused all the stone's anger and all the wrangling of the flame; with the crowd they surged into great prodigal dreams, all the way to the Circuses in the suburbs, to the explosion of the tallest tent and its dishevelment, like that of a girl, a Maenad, in a flying of canvas and rigging. . .

They were going where go the men of no birth and the younger sons of no expectations, with loose women and women of the Church, on catholic seas the color of helmets, of rapiers and old reliquaries,

And following in the Shepherd's footsteps, and the Poet's, they annexed on the way the Mormon's mauve seagull, the wild bee of the desert, and insects migrating over the seas like the fumes of fugitive things lending visor and canopy to the dreamings of women on the shore.

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Ainsi croissantes et sifflantes au tournant de notre âge, elles descendaient des hautes passes avec ce sifflement nouveau où nul n'a reconnu sa race,

Et dispersant au lit des peuples, ha! dispersant — qu'elles dispersent! disions-nous — ha! dispersant

Balises et corps-morts, bornes milliaires et stèles votives, les casemates aux frontières et les lanternes aux récifs; les casemates aux frontières, basses comme des porcheries, et les douanes plus basses au penchant de la terre; les batteries désuètes sous les palmes, aux îles de corail blanc avilies de volaille; les édicules sur les caps et les croix aux carrefours; tripodes et postes de vigie, gabions, granges et resserres, oratoire en forêt et refuge en montagne; les palissades d'affichage et les Calvaires aux détritus; les tables d'orientation du géographe et le cartouche de l'explorateur; l'amas de pierres plates du caravanier et du géodésien; du muletier peut-être ou suiveur de lamas? et la ronce de fer aux abords des corrals, et la forge de plein air des marqueurs de bétail, la pierre levée du sectateur et le cairn du landlord, et vous, haute grille d'or de l'Usinier, et le vantail ouvragé d'aigles des grandes firmes familiales. . .

Ha! dispersant — qu'elles dispersent! disions-nous — toute pierre jubilaire et toute stèle fautive,

Elles nous restituaient un soir la face brève de la terre, où susciter un cent de vierges et d'aurochs parmi l'hysope et la gentiane.

Ainsi croissantes et sifflantes, elles tenaient ce chant très pur où nul n'a connaissance.

Et quand elles eurent démêlé des œuvres mortes les vivantes, et du meilleur l'insigne,

Voici qu'elles nous rafraîchissaient d'un songe de promesses, et qu'elles éveillaient pour nous, sur leurs couches soyeuses,

Comme prêtresses au sommeil et filles d'ailes dans leur mue, ah! comme nymphes en nymphose parmi les rites d'abeillage — lingeries d'ailes dans leur gaine et faisceaux d'ailes au carquois —

Les écritures nouvelles encloses dans les grands schistes à venir. . .

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*

Increasing and whistling thus at the turn of our time, they came down from the high passes with this new whistling wherein no one has known his own race,

And scattering on the bed of the peoples, ha! scattering—let them scatter! we were saying—ha! scattering

Beacons and buoys, milestones and votive stelae, the casemates on the frontiers and the lanterns on the reefs; the casemates on the frontiers, low as pig-sties, and the custom houses down lower still to the sloping of the earth; obsolete batteries under the palm trees on white coral isles defiled by poultry; the turrets on the headlands and the crosses at the crossroads; tripods and look-out posts, gabions, barns and sheds, forest chapel and mountain refuge; the billboards and the Calvaries amid the refuse; the geographer's tables of orientation and the explorer's tablet; the flat stones piled by the caravan leader and the geodetic surveyor, by the muleteer, perhaps, or the driver of llamas? and the iron bramble at the approaches to the corrals, and the animal brander's open-air forge, the votary's stone upright and the landowner's cairn, and you, tall gilded iron-gate of the Mill-Owner, and the eagle-crested portals of the great family firms. . .

Ha! scattering—let them scatter! we were saying —every jubilee stone and every faulty stele,

One evening they restored to us the sharp face of the earth, thereon to conjure forth a hundred virgins and aurochs amid the hyssop and the gentian.

Increasing and whistling thus, they maintained this very pure song whereof no one has understanding.

And when they had unravelled the living works from the dead, and from the best the supreme,

Behold, they refreshed us with a dream of promises, and for us they awakened, on their silken couches,

Like priestesses in sleep and winged girls in their moulting, ah! like nymphs in nymphose amongst the rites of the bees—linen-work of wings in their sheaths and sheafs of wings in the quiver—

The new scriptures enclosed in the great schists of the future. . .

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O fraîcheur dans la nuit où fille d'ailes se fit l'aube: à la plus haute cime du péril, au plus haut front.

De feuilles et de frondes! . . . « Enchante-moi, promesse, jusqu'à l'oubli du songe d'être né. . . »

Et comme celui qui a morigéné les Rois, j'écouterai monter en moi l'autorité du songe.

Ivre, plus ivre, disais-tu, d'avoir renié l'ivresse. . . Ivre, plus ivre, d'habiter

La mésintelligence.

4

Tout à reprendre. Tout à redire. Et la faux du regard sur tout l'avoir menée!

Un homme s'en vint rire aux galeries de pierre des Bibliothécaires. — Basilique du Livre! . . . Un homme aux rampes de sardoine, sous les prérogatives du bronze et de l'albâtre. Homme de peu de nom. Qui était-il, qui n'etait-il pas?

Et les murs sont d'agate où se lustrent les lampes. L'homme tête nue et les mains lisses dans les carrières de marbre jaune — où sont les livres au sérail, où sont les livres dans leurs niches, comme jadis, sous bandelettes, les bêtes de paille dans leurs jarres, aux chambres closes des grands Temples — les livres tristes, innombrables, par hautes couches crétacées portant créance et sédiment dans la montée du temps. . .

Et les murs sont d'agate où s'illustrent les lampes. Hauts murs polis par le silence et par la science, et par la nuit des lampes. Silence et silencieux offices. Prêtres et prêtrise. Sérapéum!

A quelles fêtes du Printemps vert nous faudra-t-il laver ce doigt souillé aux poudres des archives — dans cette pruine de vieillesse, dans tout ce fard de Reines mortes, de flamines — comme aux gisements des villes saintes de poterie blanche, mortes de trop de lune et d'attrition?

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Oh freshness in the night when dawn transformed herself into a winged girl; at the highest peak of peril, at the highest point

Of leaves and fronds! . . . "Promise, enchant me unto forgetfulness of the dream of being born. . ."

And as one who has reprimanded Kings, I shall listen to the authority of the dream that mounts within me.

Drunken, the more drunken, you were saying, for having denied drunkenness. . . Drunken, the more drunken, for dwelling in disaccord.

4

All to be done again. All to be told again. And the scything glance to be swept across all man's heritage.

A man came who laughed at the Librarians' stone galleries.—Basilica of the Tome! . . . A man on the sardonyx stairs, beneath the prerogatives of bronze and alabaster. Man of little renown. Who was he, who was he not?

And the walls are of agate where the lamps gain luster. The man, bare-headed, with smooth hands, in the yellow marble quarries—where the tomes are in the seraglio, where the tomes are in their niches, like stuffed animals under wrappings, long ago, in their jars within the closed rooms of the great Temples—the tomes, innumerable and sad, in high cretaceous strata carrying credence and sediment through the ascent of time. . .

And the walls are of agate where the lamps become illustrious. Tall walls polished by silence and by science, and by the night of the lamps. Silence and silent offices. Priests and priesthood. Serapeum!

At what rites of green Spring must we cleanse this finger, soiled with the dust of archives—in this bloom of age, in all this powder of dead Queens and Flamens—as though from deposits of holy cities, cities of white earthenware, dead from too much attrition, too much moon.

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Ha! qu'on m'évente tout ce loess! Ha! qu'on m'évente tout ce leurre! Sécheresse et supercherie d'autels. . . Les livres tristes, innombrables, sur leur tranche de craie pâle. . .

Et qu'est-ce encore, à mon doigt d'os, que tout ce talc d'usure et de sagesse, et tout cet attouchement des poudres de savoir? comme aux fins de saison poussière et poudre de pollen, spores et sporules de lichens, un émiettement d'ailes de piérides, d'écailles aux volves des lactaires. . . toutes choses faveuses à la limite de l'infime, dépôts d'abîmes sur leurs fèces, limons et lies à bout d'avilissement — cendres et squames de l'esprit.

Ha! tout ce parfum tiède de lessive et de fomentation sous verre. . . de terres blanches à sépulcre, de terres blanches à foulon et de terre de bruyère pour vieilles Serres Victoriennes. . . toute cette fade exhalaison de soude et de falun, de pulpe blanche de coprah, et de sécherie d'algues sous leurs thalles au feutre gris des grands herbiers,

Ha! tout ce goût d'asile et de casbah, et cette pruine de vieillesse aux moulures de la pierre — sécheresse et supercherie d'autels, carie de grèves à corail, et l'infection soudaine, au loin, des grandes rames de calcaire aux trahisons de l'écliptique. . .

S'en aller! s'en aller! Parole de vivant!

5

. . . Eâ, dieu de l'abîme, ton bâillement n'est pas plus vaste.

Des civilisations s'en furent aux feux des glaces, avec la flamme des grands vins,

Et les aurores descendues des fêtes boréales, aux mains de l'habilleuse,

N'ont pas encore changé leur jeu de lingerie.

Nous coucherons ce soir les saisons mortes dans leurs robes de soirée, dans leurs dentelles de vieil or,

Et comme un chant d'oublies sur le pas des armées, au renversement des tables de Merveilleuses, de Gandins,

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Ha! let all this loess be aired out! Ha, let all this lure he aired out. Fraud and sterility of altars. . . The tomes, innumerable and sad, on their pale chalk edges. . .

And what is all this talc again to my finger of bone, talc of wear and wisdom, and all that dusty touch of scholarship? like powder and dust of pollen at the season's end, spores and sporules of lichens, a crumbling of wings of the Pieridae, of flaking volvas of the lactaries . . . all things scaling off toward nothingness, deposits of the depths over their faeces, slime and dregs at the very bottom of silt—ashes and scales of the spirit.

Ha! all this tepid odour of lye and fomentation under glass . . . of white earth of sepulchres, of white fuller's earth and heath-mould for old Victorian greenhouses . . . all that stale exhalation of kelp-ash and shell-marl, of white pulp of copra, and of seaweed's thalli drying under the grey felt of great herbariums,

Ha! all that taste of asylum and casbah, and that bloom of age over the stone mouldings—fraud and sterility of altars, decay of coral coasts, and, far away, the sudden infection of the vast limestone ranches at the perfidies of the ecliptic. . .

Let us be gone! be gone! Cry of the living!

5

. . . Eâ, god of the abysss, no vaster is your yawning.

Civilizations dwindled away in the fires of tall mirrors, with the blaze of great wines,

And the dawns, down from their boreal festivals into the hands of the dresser,

Have made as yet no change in their choice of lingerie.

Tonight we shall lay the dead seasons to bed in their ball-gowns, in their laces of old gold,

And like a chant of the vendor of gaufres in the wake of armies, at the upsetting of the tables of Merveilleuses, of Dandies,

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Notre stance est légère sur le charroi des ans!
Ne comptez pas sur moi pour les galas d'adieux des Malibran.
Qui se souvient encore des fêtes chez les hommes? — les Pâlilies, les Panonies,
Christmas et Pâques et la Chandeleur, et le Thanksgiving Day. . .
Vous qui savez, rives futures, où résonneront nos pas,
Vous embaumez déjà la pierre nue et le varech des fonts nouveaux.
Les livres au fleuve, les lampes aux rues, j'ai mieux à faire sur nos toits de regarder monter l'orage.

Que si la source vient à manquer d'une plus haute connaissance,
L'on fasse coucher nue une femme seule sous les combles —
Là même où furent, par milliers, les livres tristes sur leurs claies comme servantes et filles de louage. . .
Là qu'il y ait un lit de fer pour une femme nue, toutes baies ouvertes sur la nuit.
Femme très belle et chaste, agréée entre toutes femmes de la Ville
Pour son mutisme et pour sa grâce et pour sa chair irréprochable, infusée d'ambre et d'or aux approches de l'aine,
Femme odorante et seule avec la Nuit, comme jadis, sous la tuile de bronze,
Avec la lourde bête noire au front bouclé de fer, pour l'accointement du dieu,
Femme loisible au flair du ciel et pour lui seul mettant à vif l'intimité vivante de son être. . .
Là qu'elle soit favorisée du songe favorable, comme flairée du dieu dont nous n'avons mémoire,
Et frappée de mutisme, au matin, qu'elle nous parle par signes et par intelligences du regard.

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Our stanza is light on the traffic of the years!
Do not count on me for the Malibrans' farewell galas.
Who still remembers those feasts in the cities of men?—the Palilies, the Panonies,
Christmas and Easter and Candlemas, and Thanksgiving Day. . .
Shores of the future, you who know where our footsteps will resound,
Already you exhale the smell of new fonts, naked stone and kelp.
To the river with the tomes, to the streets with the lamps! I have better things to do on the roofs watching the storm arise.

And should the spring of higher understanding chance to fail,
Let offering be made of a naked woman lying alone under the rooftree—
There where the tomes were, by the thousands, on their racks, sad as servants and hired-girls. . .
There let there be a bed of iron for a naked woman, all the bays open to the night.
A woman, very beautiful, and chaste, chosen among all the women of the town
By virtue of her silence and her grace and her irreproachable flesh, infused with amber and gold at the curving of the groin,
A woman odorous and alone with the night, for the coupling of the god,
As, long ago, beneath the bronze tile, alone with the heavy black beast crowned by curls of iron,
A woman there, ripe for Heaven's desire, and to Heaven alone revealing the fragrant intimacy of her being . . .
There may she be favored with the favorable dream, as though hunted down by the god of whom we have no memory,
And, lying mute in the morning, may she speak to us in signs and the eyes' intimations.

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Et dans les signes du matin, à l'orient du ciel, qu'il y ait aussi un sens et une insinuation. . .

Ainsi quand l'Enchanteur, par les chemins et par les rues,
Va chez les hommes de son temps en habit du commun,
Et qu'il a dépouillé toute charge publique,
Hommes très libre et de loisir, dans le sourire et la bonne grâce,
Le ciel pour lui tient son écart et sa version des choses.
Et c'est par un matin, peut-être, pareil à celui-ci,
Lorsque le ciel en Ouest est à l'image des grandes crues,
Qu'il prend conseil de ces menées nouvelles au lit du vent.

Et c'est conseil encore de force et de violence.

6

« Ivre, plus ivre, disais-tu, de renier l'ivresse . . . »
Un homme encore se lève dans le vent. Parole brève comme éclat d'os. Le pied déjà sur l'angle de la course. . .

« Ah! oui, toutes choses descellées! Qu'on se le dise entre vivants!
Aux bas-quartiers surtout — la chose est d'importance.
Et vous, qu'allez-vous faire, hommes nouveaux, des lourdes tresses dénouées au front de l'heure répudiée?
Ceux qui songeaient les songes dans les chambres se sont couchés hier soir de l'autre côté du Siècle, face aux lunes adverses.

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And, in the signs of the morning, on the Eastern sky, may there be also a meaning and an insinuation . . .

Thus, when the Enchanter, by streets and highways,
Comes among the men of his time in the garb of a commoner,
Having laid aside all public office,
A very free man, and leisurely, smiling and of good grace,
For him the sky keeps its distance and its version of things.
And perhaps it is on a morning such as this,
When the Western sky takes on the image of the great floods,
That he takes counsel with the new conspiracies in the bed of the wind.

And once again it is counsel of force and of violence.

6

"Drunken, the more drunken, you were saying, for denying drunkenness. . ."
Once again a man arises in the wind. His word as brief as the splintering of bone. His foot already angled on its course. . .

"Ah, yes, all things torn loose! Let it be told among the living!
Above all in the lower districts—this matter is of importance.
And you, new men, what are you going to do with the heavy braids unbraided over the brow of the repudiated hour?
Those who dreamed dreams in their rooms went to bed last night on the other side of the century, facing the adverse moons.

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D'autres ont bu le vin nouveau dans les fontaines peintes au minium. Et de ceux-là nous fûmes. Et la tristesse que nous fûmes s'en aille au vin nouveau des hommes comme aux fêtes du vent!

Fini le songe où s'émerveille l'attente du Songeur.

Notre salut est dans la hâte et la résiliation. L'impatience est en tous lieux. Et par dessus l'épaule du Songeur l'accusation de songe et d'inertie.

Qu'on nous cherche aux confins les hommes de grand pouvoir, réduits par l'inaction au métier d'Enchanteurs.

Hommes imprévisibles. Hommes assaillis du dieu. Hommes nourris au vin nouveau et comme percés d'éclairs.

Nous avons mieux à faire de leur force et de leur œil occulte.

Notre salut est avec eux dans la sagesse et dans l'intempérance. »

. . . Et la tristesse que nous fûmes s'en aille encore au vin des hommes!

Nous y levons face nouvelle, nous y lavons face nouvelle. Contractants et témoins s'engagent sur les fonts.

Et si un homme auprès de nous vient à manquer à son visage de vivant, qu'on lui tienne de force la face dans le vent!

Les dieux qui marchent dans le vent ne lèvent pas en vain le fouet.

Ils nous disaient — vous diront-ils? — qu'un cent d'épées nouvelles s'avive au fil de l'heure.

Ils nous aiguiseront encore l'acte, à sa naissance, comme l'éclat de quartz ou d'obsidienne à la pointe des flèches.

« Divinités propices à l'éclosion des songes, ce n'est pas vous que j'interpelle, mais les Instigatrices ardentes et court-vêtues de l'action.

Nous avançons mieux nos affaires par la violence et par l'intolérance.

La condition des morts n'est point notre souci, ni celle du failli.

L'intempérance est notre règle, l'acrimonie du sang notre bien-être.

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Others have drunk the new wine in fountains painted with red lead. And we were of those. And may the sadness that we were be dissolved in the new wine of men, as in the festivals of the wind!

Ended the dream wherein the Dreamer marvels throughout his watch.

Our salvation is in the haste and the canceling out. Impatience is everywhere. And over the Dreamer's shoulder the indictment of dream and inertia.

Let them bring us from the Marches men of great power, reduced by inaction to the profession of Enchanter.

Unpredictable men. Men assailed by the god. Men nourished on the new wine and as though transfixed by lightning.

We have better use for their strength and for their occult eye.

Our salvation is with them, in wisdom and in vehemence."

. . . And let the sadness that was ours be dissolved again in the wine of men.

To it we lift a new face, in it we wash a new face. Covenanters and witnesses take oath before the fonts.

And should the face of any man near us fail to do honor to life, let that face be held by force into the wind.

The gods who walk in the wind do not raise the whip in vain.

They told us—will they tell you?—that a hundred new swords are sharpened on the edge of the hour.

For us they will sharpen again the act, at its inception, like the splinter of quartz or obsidian at the point of arrows.

"Not on you do I call, divinities propitious for the flowering of dreams, but on you, the passionate and high-girded ones, goddesses of action.

We further our affairs with more success by violence and intolerance.

The state of the dead is no care of ours, nor that of the bankrupt.

Vehemence is our rule, acrimony of the blood our well-being.

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Et de grands livres pénétrés de la pensée du vent, où sont-ils donc? Nous en ferions notre pâture.

Notre maxime est la partialité, la sécession notre coutume. Et nous n'avons, ô dieux! que mésintelligences dans la place. »

Nos revendications furent extrêmes, à la frontière de l'humain.

Sifflez, faillis! Les vents sont forts! Et telle est bien notre prérogative.

Nous nous levons avec ce très grand cri de l'homme dans le vent

Et nous nous avançons, hommes vivants, pour réclamer notre bien en avance d'hoirie.

Qu'on se lève de partout avec nous! Qu'on nous donne, ô vivants, la plénitude de notre dû!

*

Ha! oui, toutes choses descellées, ha! oui, toutes choses lacérées! Et l'An qui passe, l'aile haute! . . .

C'est un envol de pailles et de plumes! une fraîcheur d'écume et de grésil dans la montée des signes! et la Ville basse vers la mer dans un émoi de feuilles blanches: libelles et mouettes de même vol.

L'impatience encore est de toutes parts. Et l'homme étrange, de tous côtés, lève la tête à tout cela: l'homme au brabant sur la terre noire, le cavalier en pays haut, dans les polypes du ciel bas, et l'homme de mer en vue des passes, dans l'explosion de sa plus haute toile.

Le philosophe babouviste sort tête nue devant sa porte. Il voit la Ville, par trois fois, frappée du signe de l'éclair, et par trois fois la Ville, sous la foudre, comme au clair de l'épée, illuminée dans ses houillères et dans ses grands établissements portuaires — un golgotha d'ordure et de ferraille, sous le grand arbre vénéneux du ciel, portant son sceptre de ramures comme un vieux renne de Saga:

« O vous que rafraîchit l'orage. . . fraîcheur et gage de fraîcheur. . .

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And great books imbued with the thought of the wind, where may they be? We would feast upon them.

Our maxim is partiality, secession our custom. And we have, oh gods, nothing but misunderstanding with those inside the walls."

On the frontiers of the human, our claims were extreme.

Whistle, failures! The winds are strong! And such is surely our privilege.

We arise with this very great cry of man within the wind

And we move forward, living men, to claim our estate in advance of inheritance.

Let them arise with us from everywhere. Let the fullness of our due, oh living ones, be given unto us.

*

Ah, yes, all things torn loose! ah, yes, all things torn asunder! And the Year going by, high-winged. . .

There is a fleeing of straws and feathers! and freshness of sleet and foam in the rising of signs! and the City, low toward the sea, in a flutter of white leaves, leaflets and seamews in the same flight.

Still the impatience is on all sides. And on every side, man, strange to it all, raises his head; the man at the plough on the black earth, the horseman on the highland, amid the polyps of the low sky, and the seaman in sight of the channels, in the explosion of his highest sail.

The Babouvist philosopher comes out of his door bare-headed. Three times over he sees the City struck by the sign of lightning, and three times over, under the thunderbolt, as though in a sword's flash, the City illuminated in its collieries and the vast installations of its harbor—a golgotha of scrap-iron and garbage under the vast and poisonous tree of the sky that bears its scepter of branches like an old reindeer of the Sagas:

"Oh you whom the storm refreshes . . . freshness and promise of freshness . . .

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Repris aux dieux votre visage, au feu des forges votre éclat,

Voici que vous logez de ce côté du Siècle où vous aviez vocation.

Basse époque, sous l'eclair, que celle qui s'éteint là!

Se hâter, se hâter! parole de vivants! Et vos aînés peut-être sur des civières seront-ils avec vous.

Et ne voyez-vous pas, soudain, que tout nous vient à bas — toute la mâture et tout, le gréement avec la vergue, et toute la voile à même notre visage — comme un grand pan de croyance morte, comme un grand pan de robe vaine et de membrane fausse —

Et qu'il est temps enfin de prendre la hache sur le pont? . . . »

« Enlèvement de clôtures, de bornes! Semences et barbes d'herbe nouvelle! Et sur le cercle immense de la terre, apaisement au cœur du Novateur. . .

Les grandes invasions doctrinales ne nous surprendront pas, qui tiennent les peuples sur leur angle comme l'écaille de la terre.

Se hâter, se hâter! l'angle croît! . . . Et dans l'acclamation des choses en croissance, n'y a-t-il pas pour nous le ton d'une modulation nouvelle?

Nous t'épierons, colchique d'or! comme un chant de tuba dans la montée des cuivres.

Et si l'homme de talent préfère la roseraie et le jeu de clavecin, il sera dévoré par les chiens. »

*

Au buffet d'orgues des passions, exulte, Maître du chant!

Et toi, Poète, ô contumace et quatre fois relaps, la face encore dans le vent, chante à l'antiphonaire des typhons:

. . . « Vous qui savez, rives futures, où s'éveille-

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Your countenance recovered from the gods, your radiance from the fire of the forges,

Behold, you take your stand on this side of the Century, where you followed your calling.

A vile era this, dying out beneath the lightning-flash!

Make haste! make haste! cry of the living. And your elders, perhaps on stretchers, will be at your side.

And do you not see, suddenly, that everything is crashing around us—all the masting and everything, the rigging with the mainyard, and the whole sail over our faces—like a great fold of dead faith, like great folds of empty robes and false membranes—

And that at last, on deck, it is time to use the axe? . . ."

"Removal of enclosures, of boundary-stones. Seeds and beards of new grass. And over the earth's immense circle, gratification in the heart of the Innovator . . .

We will not be surprised by the great doctrinal invasions which keep the peoples on an angle like the scales of the earth.

Make haste! make haste! the angle increases! And in the clamour of increase, is there not the tone of a new modulation for us?

Golden crocus, like a tuba's song in the mounting brass, we shall watch for you!

And if the man of talent prefers the rose-garden and the playing of the harpsichord, he shall be devoured by the dogs."

*

Master of song, exult at the keyboard of the passions!

And you, Poet, oh rebel, four times relapsed into your heresy, with your face still in the wind, sing from the Antiphonary of typhoons:

"Shores of the future, you who know where our

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ront nos actes, et dans quelles chairs nouvelles se lèveront nos dieux, gardez-nous un lit pur de toute défaillance. . .

Les vents sont forts! les vents sont forts! Écoute encore l'orage labourer dans les marbres du soir.

Et toi, désir, qui vas chanter, sous l'étirement du rire et la morsure du plaisir, mesure encore l'espace réservé à l'irruption du chant.

Les revendications de l'âme sur la chair sont extrêmes. Qu'elles nous tiennent en haleine! Et qu'un mouvement très fort nous porte à nos limites, et au delà de nos limites!

Enlèvement de clôtures, de bornes. . . Apaisement au cœur du Novateur. . . Et sur le cercle immense de la terre, un même cri des hommes dans le vent, comme un chant de tuba. . . Et l'inquiétude encore de toutes parts. . . O monde entier des choses. . . »

Maugréantes les mers sous l'étirement du soir, comme un tourment de bêtes onéreuses engorgées de leur lait.

Murmurantes les grèves, parmi l'herbe grainante, et tout ce grand mouvement des hommes vers l'action,

Et sur l'empire immense des vivants, parmi l'herbe des sables, cet autre mouvement plus vaste que notre âge!

*

. . . Jusqu'à ce point d'écart et de silence où le temps fait son nid dans un casque de fer — et trois feuilles errantes autour d'un osselet de Reine morte mènent leur dernière ronde.

. . . Jusqu'a ce point d'eaux mortes et d'oubli en lieu d'asile et d'ambre, où l'Océan limpide lustre son herbe d'or parmi de saintes huiles — et le Poète tient son œil sur de plus pures laminaires.

7

. . . Eâ, dieu de l'abîme, les tentations du doute seraient promptes

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acts will awaken and in what new flesh our gods will arise, keep for us a bed free of all failure . . .

The winds are strong! the winds are strong! Listen once more to the storm labouring in the marble quarries of the night.

And thou, desire, who art about to sing, sharpened by laughter and pleasure's sting, measure once more the space reserved for the irruption of the song.

The soul's claims on the flesh are extreme. May they keep us on the alert! And let some very powerful movement carry us to our limits, and beyond our limits.

Removal of enclosures, of boundary-stones . . . Gratification in the heart of the Innovator. . . And over the immense circle of the earth, within the wind the cry of all men, like the tuba's song. . . And again uneasiness everywhere. . . Oh entire world of things. . ."

Fretting and fuming of seas under the lengthening of night, like the torment of burdened beasts swollen with their milk,

Murmuring of beaches amid grass running to seed, and all this great migration of men towards action,

And over the immense empire of the living, amid the beach grass, that other migration vaster than our age!

*

. . . Up to this point of withdrawal and silence, where time builds its nest in an iron helmet—and three leaves, wandering round a dead Queen's knuckle-bone, dance their last dance.

. . . Up to this point of dead waters and oblivion in a place of asylum and amber, where the limpid ocean adds lustre to its grasses, golden amid sacred oils—and the Poet keeps his eye on purer laminaria.

7

. . . Eâ, god of the abyss, the temptations of doubt would be prompt

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Où vient à défaillir le Vent. . . Mais la brûlure de l'âme est la plus forte,
Et contre les sollicitations du doute, les exactions de l'âme sur la chair
Nous tiennent hors d'haleine, et l'aile du Vent soit avec nous!

Car au croisement des fiers attelages du malheur, pour tenir à son comble la plénitude de ce chant,
Ce n'est pas trop, Maître du chant, de tout ce bruit de l'âme —
Comme au grand jeu des timbres, entre le bol de bronze et les grands disques frémissants,
La teneur à son comble des grands essaims sauvages de l'amour.

« Je t'ai pesé, poète, et t'ai trouvé de peu de poids.
Je t'ai louée, grandeur, et tu n'as point d'assise qui ne faille.
L'odeur de forges mortes au matin empuantit les antres du génie.
Les dieux lisibles désertaient la cendre de nos jours. Et l'amour sanglotait sur nos couches nocturnes.
Ta main prompte, César, ne force au nid qu'une aile dérisoire.

Couronne-toi, jeunesse, d'une feuille plus aiguë!
Le Vent frappe à ta porte comme un Maître de camp,
A ta porte timbrée du gantelet de fer.
Et toi, douceur, qui vas mourir, couvre-toi la face de ta toge
Et du parfum terrestre de nos mains. . . »

Le Vent s'accroisse sur nos grèves et sur la terre calcinée des songes!
Les hommes en foule sont passés sur la route des hommes,

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Were the wind to fail . . . But the fever of the soul prevails,
And contrary to the solicitations of doubt, may the demands of the soul on the flesh
Keep us breathless, and the wing of the Wind be with us!

For, when the proud chariot-teams of misfortune cross,
All this clamour of the soul is not excessive, oh Master of the song, to maintain the fullness of this song at its height—
As, in the great ringing of bells, between the brass bowl and the great quivering disks,
Love's great savage swarms are maintained at their height.

"I have weighed you, poet, and found you of little weight.
I have praised you, Grandeur, and found you faulty in all your foundations.
The odour of dead forges at dawn infests the caverns of genius.
All trace of the gods deserted the ashes of our days. And love sobbed on our nocturnal beds.
Ceasar, your hasty hand forces from the nest but one derisive wing.

Crown yourself, youth, with a sharper-pointed leaf.
The Wind knocks at your door like the Master of the camp,
At your door crested with the iron gauntlet.
And gentleness, you who are about to die, bury your face in your toga,
In the earthy smell of our hands. . ."

Let the Wind increase on our shores and on the calcined land of dreams!
Multitudes of men have passed along man's road,

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Allant où vont les hommes, à leurs tombes. Et c'est au bruit

Des hautes narrations du large, sur ce sillage encore de splendeur vers l'Ouest, parmi la feuille noire et les glaives du soir. . .

Et moi j'ai dit: N'ouvre pas ton lit à la tristesse. Les dieux s'assemblent sur les sources,

Et c'est murmure encore de prodiges parmi les hautes narrations du large.

Comme on buvait aux fleuves incessants, hommes et bêtes confondus à l'avant-garde des convois,

Comme on tenait au feu des forges en plein air le long cri du métal sur son lit de luxure,

Je mènerai au lit du vent l'hydre vivace de ma force, je fréquenterai le lit du vent comme un vivier de force et de croissance.

Les dieux qui marchent dans le vent susciteront encore sur nos pas les accidents extraordinaires.

Et le poète encore est avec nous. Et c'est montée de choses incessantes dans les conseils du ciel en Ouest.

Un ordre de solennités nouvelles se compose au plus haut faîte de l'instant.

Et par là-bas mûrissent en Ouest les purs ferments d'une ombre prénatale — fraîcheur et gage de fraîcheur,

Et tout cela qu'un homme entend aux approches du soir, et dans les grandes cérémonies majeures où coule le sang d'un cheval noir. . .

S'en aller! s'en aller! Parole de vivant.

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Going where men go, to their graves. And they go to the sound

Of the lofty narratives of space, still in this wake of splendor westward, between the black leaves and the blades of night. . .

And I myself have said: Do not open your bed to sorrow. The gods are assembling at the fountain-heads,

And there is a murmur of wonders once more in the lofty narratives of space.

Even as we drank from ceaseless rivers, men and animals mingled in the vanguard of the convoys,

Even as we held in the fire of the open-air forges the long scream of the metal on its bed of lust,

So I shall bring to the wind's bed the fiery hydra of my strength, I shall frequent the wind's bed as a breeding-ground of vigour and increase.

The gods who walk in the wind will again raise up extraordinary events along our paths.

And the poet is still with us. And in the councils of the Western sky recurrent signs are in the ascendant.

An order of new solemnities is composed at the instant's pinnacle.

And down there the pure ferments of a prenatal shadow mature in the West—freshness and promise of freshness,

And all that a man hears at the approaches of night, and in the great master ceremonies when the blood of a black horse flows. . .

Let us be gone! be gone! Cry of the living.

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PAUL CLAUDEL

A Poem by St.-John Perse[1]

THERE IS A POETRY nourished on space and for the development of which space is a necessity, a poetry born less of an exact regulation of verbal combinations than of an attention to a harmony beyond ourselves, to a harmony, huge and diverse in its elements (memories or imaginings) which, in the same breath, suddenly animated by a natural or an unexpected relationship, flow together in the same direction. To this category belongs the epic poem, thrust forward toward a goal across a predisposed setting, leaving behind a turbulent wake of scenes, figures, and events, and differing from the novel in this respect, that here rhythm introduces a solemn element of gratification. To this category also belongs the poetry once labeled didactic by the rhetoricians, and more correctly named *contemplative,* of which the ancient Greek and Hindu poets, not to mention the great Lucretius, have given us models. And now, in the midst of our French language, a monumental example has arisen, like a Mont Saint-Michel immensely accentuated by the ebb-tide.

This poem is called *Winds,* and it is signed with a fictitious name: St.-John Perse.

Would you like the portrait of the author? Look carefully at the extraordinary self-portrait of a Japanese poet, Shiki, who died at the beginning of the century. The entire face has been sacrificed to its function. The eyelids and all the features are no more than mere indications, at varying degrees of evanescence. Nothing remains within the facial frame save those two pairs of round holes which I am tempted to refer to as magnets. And these are the eyes of the contemplator. The contemplator is he who exerts an attraction, beyond what is near and in flux, across the distances at which he is gazing.

Winds, the title chosen for the poem, *Winds* in the plural, lends itself to confusion and, in my opinion, does not sufficiently bring

[1]This article originally appeared in French, in slightly different form, in *Revue de Paris,* November 1949, and was reprinted in a special issue of *Cahiers de la Pléiade* devoted to the work of St.-John Perse.

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out the unity of the enterprise undertaken. An epic, yes, decidedly, for since there has been an epic of return (that of Ulysses), why should there not be one of the outward voyage? But there is only one wind, the one from the West, with varying degrees of duration and intensity, a modulation infinitely supple in intent. How could the European adventurer, come to the edge of his continent, have resisted this double temptation, of the sun over there calling to him and of this wind resisting him?

*

Because of his age and circumstances, St.-John Perse has had horizons divided between one century and another, one side and another of the world and of humanity—a situation which one might term dihedral, a destiny permitting lines of intersection.

Actually he comes from the West. He was born, right in the center of the cluster of the Antilles, into all that the setting sun promises to the occupants of this pier of embarkation which is Europe. Is not the Setting Sun the homeland, the true homeland of all men of desire?—that of the Maitreya Buddha, toward which one day the fabulous Laotze set forth, and that which condemned Christopher Columbus to exile for his whole life. He, St.-John Perse, was born there. And though he left at an early age, one can imagine that he has never ceased to hear, from that direction, the reproach and the recall. At last the moment came to collect and assemble his forces for a great investigation, not on a geographic or political or economic level, but on that of the spirit, for consulting with the great mute Presences: The Thing far beyond the Sea! And this barrier, this threshold, once traversed—pure Space, the Sea beyond the sea!

It begins with a shuddering all around us of things dead and dried up:

Like a great tree in its rags and remnants of last winter, wearing the livery of the dead year,

Like a great tree shuddering in its rattles of dead wood and its corollas of baked clay, . . .

Like that great magical tree in its winter squalor, proud of its portion of icons and fetishes, . . .

Ah! very great tree of language, peopled with oracles and maxims, and murmuring the murmur of one born blind. . . .

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Every epic poem begins with an Invocation, as though addressing the path. Here the "Narrator" entrusts the burden to one of those sorcerer priests, dedicated to intercourse with the Great Expanse, whom he had long ago encountered in Mongolia: *Divination by entrails and breath and palpitations of breath! . . . Favor of the god on my poem!*

He begins his career amidst the ancient peoples of Europe, under the general discontent, across a jumble of dreams, theories, imaginary constructions, of which the artisan, the engineer-decorator, is the Wind. We think always of the Wind as something exhaled, driving us; in reality it is something inhaled, borrowed by the void from the unknown and, for us, inhabitants of the Atlantic fringe, most often from the West. Three pages follow, describing to us this travail of dispersion, like the vapor of a landscape drifting into the realm of memory; and, at the same time, of propositions and promises. There is a hint of "new writings", like those in the files inscribed "in the great schists of the future". The poet is not in accord with any of these. Is not his vocation, as he says, *disaccord?*

All to be done again . . . And the scything glance to be swept across all man's heritage!

As a point of departure the explorer has chosen a library, cemetery of mummified ideas and images, untold "sediment" of books "in high cretaceous strata". . . .

Ha! All this tepid odor of lye and fomentation under glass . . . of white earth of sepulchres . . . and heath-mould for old Victorian greenhouses . . . and that bloom of age over the stone mouldings—fraud and sterility of altars, decay of coral coasts . . . Let us be gone! be gone! Cry of the living! Nothing for us in that store of supplies, in that old stock of oddments in the bazaar of knowledge! Before us, *Ea, god of the abyss, no vaster is your yawning.* Counsel is that naked woman whom the Enchanter establishes in a spot as close as possible to the stars, at the pinnacle, say, of one of those edifices which New York has raised in imitation of the ancient Babylonian Ziqquraths. *Counsel of force and of violence.* Recourse to the living energy under the calcareous deposit. *Once again a man arises in the wind . . . his foot already angled on its course. . .*

Others have drunk the new wine in fountains painted with red lead. And we were of those. . . Ended the dream. . . Our salva-

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tion is in the haste and the canceling out. . . Let them bring us from the Marches men of great power, reduced by inaction to the profession of Enchanter. . . The state of the dead is no care of ours, nor that of the bankrupt. Vehemence is our rule, acrimony of the blood our well-being. . . On the frontiers of the human, our claims were extreme. . . We arise with this very great cry of man within the wind, and we move forward, living men, to claim our estate in advance of inheritance. . .

Farewell, oh City! . . . *The City three times over struck by the sign of lightning, and three times over, under the thunderbolt, as though in a sword's flash, the City illuminated in its collieries and the vast installations of its harbor—a golgotha of scrap-iron and garbage under the vast and poisonous tree of the sky that bears its scepter of branches like an old reindeer of the Sagas.*

Removal of enclosures, of boundary-stones. . . Oh entire world of things. . .

And if the wind went down? *The fever of the soul prevails, and contrary to the solicitations of doubt the demands of the soul on the flesh. . .*

We have no need of legible gods:

The Wind knocks at your door crested with the iron gauntlet. . .

And there is a murmur of wonders once more in the lofty narratives of space. . . An order of new solemnities is composed at the instant's pinnacle . . . (the angle, the line of intersection of which I spoke before.) *And down there the pure ferments of a prenatal shadow mature in the West—freshness and promise of freshness. . .*

Let us be gone! be gone! cry of the living!

*

The first measures of Canto II make themselves heard. It is, and will continue to be, a question of America: I mean, under northern latitudes, this vast spreading out of the long vertical continent which has come to be a countenance lending expression to the whole body—an expanse of humanity homogeneous as the sea. And, by vocation, St.-John Perse is a sailor, who appreciates only the sea and what is most like the sea, the plain, the desert, the steppe, the prairie; Central Asia where, long ago, he "navigated". Here he is now, running close-hauled under the incitement of the winds which, each morning, parade great isobaric lines across the pages of newspapers.

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It is, after all, a continent ill-tamed by man, a land violated rather than espoused, and which, beneath the brutal knee, one still senses as savage, refractory, irreducible. The poets have known it well: another world, not entirely authentic, divided by a double nostalgia of memory of the East and curiosity for the West. It breathes an atmosphere of suspense, of the day's end, impregnated in the North with a puritan melancholy (the novels of Hawthorne), in the South with a stagnant stupor, funereal, mortuary (the marshes of Carolina, the cypresses under their floating shrouds of Spanish moss, the poems of Edgar Allan Poe, the novels of Caldwell and Faulkner). And within is the continual presence, surrounding and penetrant, of an autochthonous fluid, an electricity now raising you up, surfeiting, overexciting you to the point of hysteria, then leaving you helpless, defunct, annihilated. And from time to time arise certain crises of nature's despair, the frantic gallopings of the tornado and the blizzard, as though to verify the frontiers of this vast Void in which we are immersed. Everywhere, outside of ourselves, extends the immoderate, the Void—an absence of external justification for the place which we occupy, the mortal obsession of that Ennui from which it is a matter of escaping at any price and against which, in vain, attempts have been made to set up cooperative organizations. . . . Strangers: there are only strangers here. *Exile.*[2] Quickly now, alcohol, gin, politics, dancing, the movies, the automobile, and from the automobile, like the signal of a shipwrecked man, an antenna desperately hoisted! If one is not to resign one's self to the corpse-like withdrawal of those bodies lined up on the verandas, then, at any price, one must escape the obvious by restlessness, one must elude the persistence of this look which, all about us, looks at us! *Cause for suspicion! cause for suspicion!* our guide repeats three times.

To really understand all of this, one must have lived a long time amongst the world's most authentic people, a race of epicurean Jobs, thoroughly happy, thoroughly satisfied, thoroughly grounded, autochthonous—the Chinese people.

But the purpose of the poet who now invites us to accompany him is very different from my own. With him it is not a question of understanding, but of divining, in the etymological sense of the

[2] *Exil*: title of the first collection of poems written in America by St.-John Perse.

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word: *divinari.* It is not so much a matter of analytical intelligence, resulting from an external study of the form, the organs, the politics, the history, the thought, as it is of an intuitive inner "intelligence". As for "this great secret of melancholy" of which Chateaubriand speaks, it is not for us a question of confronting its cause and effect, it is a question of espousing it. Of espousing it? Less of espousing it, perhaps, than of resorting to the root of ourselves to furnish it a concord with the appropriate harmonics. It is the same in business or in love: the sense of what is said to us is often less important than the tone. And in the same way, from the heart of natural phenomena, a certain tone evolves with which it is up to us to negotiate. A tone transcribed, undoubtedly, in that sort of cipher writing of which Novalis speaks. "That cipher writing", he says, "which one meets everywhere, on wings, on eggshells, in clouds, in snow, in crystals and petrifactions, inside and outside mountains, plants, animals, and men, in the transparencies of the sky." Everything *means,* but nothing has significance save by the exclusion of the translation, following this essential *disaccord* of which St.-John Perse spoke to us previously and which makes up the substance of those archives which he showed to us shrouded in the leaves of the schist! Thence, in St.-John Persean rhetoric, this perpetual transposition from the seen onto the level of the read and the heard:

A Bible of shadow and freshness in the unrolling of this world's most beautiful texts. . . . And there is a taste of things previous, like the evocation of sources and commentaries for the great preliminary Titles, like the great preparatory pages for the great Books of Maecenas. . . . The great wintry prose. . . . A sky like the poetic fury, in the delights and filth of creation. . . . Flights of insects like fragments of sacred texts, like the tatters of errant prophecies and of recitations of genealogists, of psalmists. . . . Clarification of the messages: reply given by the heart's illumination. Not at all what is written, but the thing itself. . . . Conservation, not of the copies, but of the originals. And the writing of the poet follows the immediate report. . . . You will reveal yourself, oh lost cipher! . . . etc. etc.

To this obsession with the *text,* another is added: that of the *sign,* of the *inner sign,* of the indecipherable cipher, of the thing that means. From an often quoted letter by St.-John Perse I extract the following:

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"Of all the museums of Europe through which out of courtesy I have passed (and is politeness not still the best formula for liberty?), I have retained a very few impressions: in London, at the British Museum, the crystal skull from the pre-Columbian collection, and at the South Kensington Museum, a little child's boat, now gone, which Lord Brassey picked up in the middle of the Indian Ocean; at the Kremlin, a woman's bracelet with the raw hock of a horse stuffed under the crude harness of a nomad conqueror; at the Armeria in Madrid, a set of armor for an Infante; in Warsaw, a beautiful letter of some prince on a leaf of beaten gold; at the Vatican, a similar letter of goatskin; in Bremen, an historic collection of fantastic engravings for the lining of cigar-boxes."

One thinks of those little sticks curiously carved, which, when they completed one another, used to serve as credentials for conspirators. And then of the attention given by Mystics to those objects underfoot in which they find many intimations.

Thus, in part, are explained some unusual terms carefully collected by St.-John Perse from I don't know what vocabularies and used by him less for their suggestive or aesthetic value than for their power, if I may say so, of catalysis.

*

And behind us, in the occult eye which follows us, the end has come of seeing the sea's tall reredos arise like the great stone wall of the Tragedies.

Here is *a taste of things previous, . . . the new lands, . . . a freshness of free waters and of shades, . . . a freshness of lands in infancy, like a perfume of things everlasting, on this side of everlasting things, and like a prenuptial dream. . . .*

And the land in its long lines, on its longest strophes, running, from sea to sea, to loftier scriptures, in the distant unrolling of this world's most beautiful texts. . . .

Thither were we going, from swell to swell, along the Western degrees. . . . And the earth in its fullness, bearing tribute from new States, from area to area assembles its great blocks of green bronze whereon our laws are inscribed. . . . And over there is the Wind! . . . Winter, crisp as the hair of Cain.

At the threshold of a great new country without title or device, at the threshold of a great green bronze country without dedi-

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cation or date, lifting a finger of flesh in the rush of the wind, I question, Oh Power! . . .

You I question, oh fullness!—And you are such a silence. . . .

And now it is the South, the Gulf, this communion in the mud of the two elements, the two species, the immense descent of water like the steady escapement of a clock.

Oh chances, direct toward the green water the great alluvial islands wrested from their slime! . . .

Let them go down, sacred mounds . . . with the rivers under their bubbles pulling their load of tributaries, pulling their chain of membranes, viscera, and great placentary pouches—all the vine-arbor of their sources and the great capillary tree, all the way into its extensions of veins and veinlets. . . .

There follow several pages dedicated to the historical South, of the Colonial period, of the War of Secession: *We know the anthem. It is from the South.*

But, *to-day it is wholly a matter of stone, and of filling, with a single block, the stone place between two seas, the stone time between two centuries.—Let the slimy river lie heavy and deep in its bed under the grits of the rain, drawing along, in its very center, all the melting of a low land. . . .*

Our difficult roads are in the West, where the stone flows to its afflux . . . amidst the magnetic storm, painting with three sulphur colors the sudden exhalation of a world of stupor. . . . The dead valleys, with great cries. . . . The clay porch without shutters. . . . In the fawn colors of evening, the pitcher suspended. . . . An heraldic eagle rises in the wind.

—Texts received in plain language! versions given on two sides! . . . You, yourself, a stele and a cornerstone! . . . And for new wanderings astray, I summon you in litigation on your dihedral chair, Oh Poet, Oh bilingual one, amidst all things two-pronged, and you, yourself, litigious amidst all things litigious—man assailed by the god! man talking the equivocal! . . .

And you, Sun from below, ferocity of the Being with no eyelids, hold your puma's eye in all this loaf of precious stones. . . .

And beyond are the living chalks of look-out rocks, the steep escarpments, with great cries, holding the night in abhorrence; and the forms marching on the peaks, amongst the blindness of things. . . . On the brows of the tall limestones, dazzled with presence, more than one mask grows.

Thus ends Canto II.

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*

Canto III is History, the driving forward and the breaking-through of successive Conquistadors (amongst whom one regrets that place was not given to the French, the Canadian *coureurs des bois*), Spaniards, Protestants, Mormons, and finally the scholars of today in their struggle—in their direct struggle—with matter.

It is a question of man! . . . When will it be a question of man himself?—Will someone in the world raise his voice? . . . Make haste! make haste! testimony for man!

Here at last is the Poet, *emerging from his millenary rooms, the Poet himself at the gangway head of the Century! . . . For it is a question of man and his reinstatement.*

This is the time *of the great adventurers of the soul . . . interrogating all the land in order to understand the meaning of this very great confusion. . . .*

I shall dismiss you, logic! . . . And you, eye, take charge of the course! pupil open on the abyss! . . . And will the Seer not have his chance? the Listener his response? . . . This hour, perhaps the last! . . . this very minute! this instant! . . .

For unlike France, America is not an abode, a composed dwelling-place. It is a succession of parallel barriers, the Alleghanies, the Mississippi, the Rockies. An invitation to go on! Onward, always onward! Forward! *The cry, the piercing cry of the god over us!*

*

It was yesterday, the winds were silent. Thus begins Canto IV. *Is it nothing but human? . . .* Interlude. The doubt. The halt of the horseman, *his forehead against the saddle, in the brief hour of the girth. . . And will he find again the sign of the spur even in the moon's last quarter, slim as the ergot of a white rose?*

Again this entwining of womens' arms. . . . *One evening we were in our dream returning again to the path of man.*

And again the Mesa: *To go where go the Cordilleras, saddled with azure as though with a cargo of quartz. . . . I remember high country, nameless, illumined with horror and empty of all import. . . . There the wind lifts its immunities; there the earth gives up its birthright for a shepherd's broth. . . . A civilization of the wool and the yolk . . . wisdom dragged forth from the great satchels of coca. . . . The women slow, with a mustiness of sheep . . . the*

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women scoured with naphtha for the feasts. . . . Men of sandstone, women heavier and vaster than grindstones. . . .

Further on! further on! on the green crepon slopes.

Further down! further down! and Westward facing! in all this effusion of the soil in great falls and flats,—toward other slopes more auspicious and other shores more favorable. . . .

All the way to this other mass of unreality, all the way to this high layer of paleness in the West

wherein resides the grace of a great name—Pacific Sea! . . . Oh Balboa's sea . . . the one which must never be mentioned! . . .

Further down! further down! on the graded terraces of this slope of the world, lowering, at each degree, by one tone the table nearest to the Sea. (And from every distant place she is present and close to me, and from every distant place she is union and grace to me, and circumlocution) . . .

Faster! faster! to these last terrestrial versions, to these last flowings of gneiss and porphyry, all the way to this strand of nuggets, all the way to the thing itself, gushing forth! the sea itself gushing forth! hymn of strength and splendor into which, one evening, man thrusts his quivering beast,

the white beast, purple with sweat, and darkened as though with the evil of being mortal! . . .

We are a long way from Marcel Proust!

I know! . . . To see nothing twice!—But if all is known to me, is not living but seeing twice over? . . .

And all is recognition for us. And always, oh memory, you will forestall us in all the new lands where we have never lived. . . .

Here the shore and suture. And beyond, the disowning. . . . The sea in the West, and again the Sea, familiar to all our phantoms. . . .

Further on! further on! where the first of the solitary islands are—round islands, and low, and ringed with infinite space like the stars. . . .

And beyond, the last one to the West, the island where the last shrub lived twenty years ago: a meliaceous bush of the lavas, we believe. . . .

And beyond, beyond is the last wrinkling of moods on the expanse of the seas.

A dry conflagration, like the spark that flies out at the meeting of two incompatible fields of electricity!

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It is at this point in your reverie that the thing occurred: the sudden flash, crossed like a Crusader! . . .

And the rider to the West is checked: an invincible hand wrenches his horse's head toward the East. . . . What was it you were going to abandon there?

Dream of that later on, and may you remember it! And, with the beast rearing high, the aloofness in which to hold high a more jutting soul.

No twenty-year-old boy, drunk on adventure and the unknown, is writing these lines. It is a man of sixty, who has behind him a great past—as man-of-the-world, as diplomat and political man—dependent on him alone for its continuance and its crowning—a man involved in the greatest affairs of the world.

And you had so little time for being born to that instant!

*

And now we must return:

One autumn evening we shall return, on the last rumblings of the storm, when the dense trias of the gulfs over which we fly opens its pits of blue tar to the Sun of the dead. . . . And suddenly, before us, beneath the lofty bar of the dark, the clear and tender land of our daughters, a golden knife in its heart!

I, too, have known these returns! these departures and these returns! Yet does one ever return? Nothing will reconcile us to the indelible remorse of a mutual breach of faith, to that break with habit, that declaration of incompatibility.

Shall we, before daybreak, open up a stranger's road to the family door? when as yet there is no one in the streets to contend with the early-morning Fates for that hour when the unburied dead go in search of the scraps in the garbage cans and the discarded doctrines in the rag picker's piles. . . .

For us, beyond the excuses and the consolations, has come the moment of conclusion: *We have had enough of these stone probities in our squares, and of those Virgins of Comitias on the paper of the Banks . . . we have had enough of these great family alliances, of the great lay priesthoods. . . . And over the town will the Halls of Archives still lift up to the dawning day their stone medallions, empty as blind men's pupils? . . .*

We had an appointment with the end of an Age. No abjuration for us! *There is no longer any meaning for us in what was.*

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All the same, shut-in peoples, give thanks to me! Someone has come to restore to you the immensity, to restore to you the horizon! *And the Wind is with us, drunk on a bitter and powerful principle. . . . There are very great forces in travail on the highway of men, very great forces in harness. . . . But the poet is with you, his thoughts amongst you like watch towers. . . . And the exigency within him has not fallen silent; nor has his claim decreased. . . . There is no settlement with his grievance. . . . Until the evening, may he maintain, may he maintain his gaze on the fortune of man!* And on all that, far off, *peoples the abyss of his eyes.*

*

The abyss of his eyes! I return to the symbolic portrait which I evoked at the beginning of this study. A face made up of two devouring eyes forever incapable of closing. Someone, the Contemplator, questioning only outwardly.

To summarize, the position is epic rather than lyric or dramatic. In the Ode, it is the poet who speaks and who speaks to us; in the drama he confides the different registers of his expression to fictitious characters. The epic vein is that of the poet exercising on the inspiration—or the Wind—in the interest of a specific story for which he is responsible, an action both distributive and organizing.

I should not say, then, that the eye of the Seer listens, but rather that it surveys and controls. In his position, he is, from within to without, a sort of engineer catalyst who treats himself to the spectacle of all that the word (both apart from him and thanks to him) is able to let loose,—a bristling of images and of memories, like those cat's-paws of wind, when one is becalmed at sea, which suddenly people the smooth surface with momentary audiences. One proceeds then across the improvisations of the Spirit.

*

It is time to conclude. But, in the hesitant conclusion to his spiritual adventure given by this successor to Columbus, who will find satisfaction? I know that it is a great deal for a human being, so subject to encystment in his own shell, to habituate himself to the Universe, to think in terms of the whole, to enlarge his breath-

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able area, in order to enrich with reality the indispensable reservoir of our dreams. Just as, today, there are no closed economies nor closed civilizations, so there can no longer be closed imaginations nor propositions safe from their correspondences. Charged henceforth with understanding, there is no longer any wind which has not become spirit—a spirit which smiles its quiet invitation to our inner soul.

As for the wind, this element which brings us life, it is not only a reservoir from which we imbibe, it is a sort of intention toward us, for which the word *inspiration* was created. But there is not only the inspiration and respiration of this one particular individual. There is a cosmic inspiration and respiration. There is the respiration of our planet. *Surge, Aquilo!* says the Canticle (4-16), *et veni, Auster, perfla hortum meum.* Likewise, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, we see the four Winds of the sky at work assembling humanity. That breath of the monsoon, long ago, rustling the great blinds of my veranda, that breath of wind with its great renewals of the sea, that solemn respiratory function of our world—one knows that it arises from the exchange between the overheated zone of the equator and the cold air of the North, deflected by planetary rotation, the tradewinds ceremonially evicting the counter-tradewinds. It is good to know that and to receive, full in the face, the will of God. But God is a word which St.-John Perse avoids—should I say, religiously? . . . And nevertheless, led by the sun against this breathing wind, now violent, now treacherous, now meditative, what was it he was searching for on the far side of every barrier, what was it he was seeking from the reservoirs of the Incommensurable?

[*translated by Hugh Chisholm*]

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W. S. MERWIN

Festival

Laughter is not celebration
And may not coax with renewal
The closed heads bending
In their garden at heal of evening.

I that am king of no country—
Shall a mind of dry leaves
On the erstwhile meadow
Invoke for me a grey retinue?

I would have a weather
Of spells and reflections
Whether dawn or a moon hang
In the green lagoon where fish swim.

You have seen the afternoon
Turn among shadows under
A flutter of paper and laurel.
Was that a dance or hesitancy?

And a body that made
A spectre his companion,
Fruitless until dark,
Lay down and embraced a lean shadow.

Dictum: for a Masque of Deluge

There will be the cough before the silence, then
Expectation; and the hush of portent
Must be welcomed by a diffident music
Lisping and dividing its renewals;
Shadows will lengthen and sway, and, casually
As in a latitude of diversion
Where growth is topiary, and the relaxed horizons
Are accustomed to the trespass of surprise,
One with a mask of Ignorance will appear
Musing on the wind's strange pregnancy.

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And to him one must enter from the south
In a feigned haste, with disaster on his lips,
And tales of distended seas, continents
Submerged, worlds drowned, and of drownings
In mirrors; unto this foreboding
Let them add sidelong but increasing mention,
With darkening syllables, of shadows, as though
They stood and traded restlessness beneath
A gathering dark, until their figures seem
But a flutter of speech down an expense of wind.

So, with talk, like a blather of rain, begun,
Weather will break and the artful world will rush
Incontinent. There must be a vessel.
There must be rummage and shuffling for salvation
Till on that stage and violence, among
Curtains of tempest and shaking sea,
A covered basket, where a child might lie,
Timbered with osiers and floated on a shadow,
Glides adrift, as improbably sailing
As a lotus flower bearing a bull.

Hills are to be forgotten; the patter of speech
Must lilt upon flatness. The beasts will come;
And as they come, let one man, by the ark,
Drunken with desolation, his tongue
Rounding the full statement of the seasons,
Tremble and stare, his eyes seeming to chase
A final clatter of doomed crows, to seek
An affirmation, a mercy, an island,
Or hills crested with towns, and to find only
Cities of cloud already crumbling.

And these the beasts: the bull from the lotus flower
With wings at his shoulders; and a goat, winged;
A serpent undulating in the air;
A lion with wings like falling leaves;
These are to wheel on a winged wheel above

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The sullen ark, while hare, swine, crocodile,
Camel and mouse come; and the sole man, always,
Lurches on childish limbs above the basket—
To his mere humanity seas shall not attain
With tempest, nor the obscure sky with torches.

(Why is it rumored that these beasts come in pairs
When the anatomies of their existence
Are wrought for singularity? They walk
Beside their shadows; their best motions are
Figments on the drapery of the air.
Their propagation is a redoubling
Merely of dark against the wall, a planetary
Leaning in the night unto their shadows
And stiffening to the moment of eclipse;
Shadows will be their lean progeny.)

At last the sigh of recession: the land
Wells from the water; the beasts depart; the man
Whose shocked speech must conjure a landscape
As of some country where the dead years keep
A circle of silence, a drying vista of ruin,
Musters himself, rises, and stumbling after
The dwindling beasts, under the all-colored
Paper rainbow, whose arc he sees as promise,
Moves in an amazement of resurrection,
Solitary, impoverished, renewed.

A falling frond may seem all trees. If so
We know the tone of falling. We shall find
Dictions for rising, words for departure;
And time will be sufficient before that revel
To teach an order and rehearse the days
Till the days are accomplished: so now the dove
Makes assignations with the olive tree,
Slurs with her voice the gestures of the time:
The day foundering, the dropping sun
Heavy, the wind a low portent of rain.

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Margery's Song

I am a jill-whisper
And a cold sister
And a windy daughter
With hawthorne in my hair.

Five fingers of thin willow
Flicker my preferment;
I go feat but draughty
With a ghost of rag about me.

A nimble bird I saw:
Ruses were its children;
And friendly was the wind
But spoke me hungerly.

A little coin, a morsel,
Give me for my sleeking
For fear trespass should busy
Hands no better than bony.

Whose dish is cold and clever?
I saw a bone shiver.
In name of shadows bleating
Yet meatily the mouth feeds.

Soul is thin confusion.
I am vagary
Snared in a bony body
With hawthorne in my hair.

The Bones of Palinurus Pray to the North Star

Console us. The wind chooses among us.
Our whiteness is a night wake disordered.
Lone candor, be constant over us,
Us desolate who gleam no direction.

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DAVID KNIGHT

The Fall of Irish Johnston

"MR. JOHNSTON, you can stop being a foreman; I've had enough of you. Go and pick up a shovel."

Irish was standing in the shade of a column-form lighting a cigarette when the superintendent came up and spoke to him. Several of the men standing around heard, and saw the cigarette and match together drop from his fingers into the sand. Slim Wolawski, standing nearest, lowered his shovel and beckoned the others into silence. As Irish looked into the superintendent's face, and then past him out across the job, he realized that for twenty feet around, except for an old man working on column-steel, everyone was waiting for him to move, expecting some outbreak of the temper that had cowed them at times before, possibly even a forearm and fist. Then he looked back at the superintendent in front of him; and then the strange thing to all of them was that he went and picked up a shovel, came straight back to where he had been standing, and began to dig with the other men, not looking at their faces, though they watched. The old man above tightened a twist of heavy wire with his pliers and gave it a vicious extra tug; Slim's eyes burnt up at him in concentrated disgust, and then the superintendent had walked away and they were working again. Irish bent to his shovel, only half-seeing when the blade cut his fallen cigarette in two.

So days went by, and the unbelievable sank into routine; but the feeling of numbed finality remained. Irish Johnston, foreman, who walked among the men with a little swagger and gave one or two more commands a day than were needed, was foreign now and dead. He had been arrogant and now it was over. The man who succeeded him dug in sand and felt almost nameless, even to himself. By him the superintendent's resentment went unnoticed, because there was nothing there any more for it to strike against: no pride, or not that kind, no vulnerable authority, no half-forced grin of something like triumph that could be broken with a word. It had taken years to stand on that sand hill and boss a few men in a hospital that was going up around him, to

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keep himself in measure with the superintendent above him and the men under him, but he had pushed through to that level: to hold it for a year and then have it all go out from under him as if it had never been there at all. He dug into the ground, raised the dry sand up into the heat and sent it scattering, and again, and again under the sun, keeping his eyes down, his mind blank. To this point had he come.

The men watched him. They had liked him and resented him, and found now that there was nothing they could do about it, either way. Irish had broken from them to become a foreman, now as a laborer he broke even further away. He had won a peculiar neutral position in their respect, but he puzzled them. In the end their answer was to ignore him. It seemed right then after a time, when the superintendent relented to give him a better job, that Irish should have been taken away from them completely. "Mr. Johnston," he said, "come over here. Do you think you can handle a pair of pliers?"

"Why don't they let him alone?"

"All right, Wolawski, are you working on this job?"

Slim bent his head, holding his face fixed, and Irish stepped past him and up the bank onto the scuffed grass where the superintendent was standing with the old man. Only after seconds did Slim look up again, and when he saw the meeting he hardened where he stood into a statue of watching. Irish had been given over into the hands of the old man, would be his assistant now. Slim gave a great sigh and relaxed onto his shovel, still gazing. Evil would come of it now, he thought, and he shivered at the wind blowing across his back.

Slim Wolawski was a lonely person, and irritable: a figure that had been drawn for a Botticelli warrior and then degraded of all its nobility, with nothing left him but the complete precision of the drawing of the face, the brown fresco pallor, and a look of intense boredom and a weariness that hurt and that nothing could shake. He had given up changing from one job to another and now dragged his shovel through this one, beyond patience, in his unchanging faded blue coveralls and the dark blue jockey cap with the broken peak, mocked when the sun came out by a glitter of tarnished gold in the sandy air about him. His capacity for resentment was prodigious and general, and nothing new had ever happened to him, except a sort of revelation of pride which had

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made Irish into his hero in the weeks before when Irish was still foreman. Now that had fallen, in a moment of stillness when nothing moved but the old gnome and his steel, and in the following emptiness all his resentment had gathered to a focus. His eyes still followed Irish, with the pity saved for broken gods, but his worship had changed and found another object. That his clothes on the job should every day grind sand into his skin; that dollar bills should always come to him limp and dirty; that tobacco should fall out of his cigarettes, beer make him only cold and unsteady, and the women that he visited bring him to an already rumpled bed: everything came to be comprehended in the single figure of the old man at his steel, although Slim had never worked with the old man, and did not even know his name.

Now Irish had stopped moving. The two looked at each other. "All right, Mr. Johnston, you're on the steel gang now. You'll work with this man here."

He was short and thick, with black overalls and an old straw hat that was almost black itself; he had hair that should have been white but was always a smudged grey; and he was slovenly and foul-mouthed, but strong and quick like a monkey and with a face about as human. The two men shook hands formally, like adversaries, hand to paw. The old man had no family that he ever thought of, nothing human that he really cared for: only his remembered lecheries, his words of filth, and the pleasure of tying steel into buildings. He had a latent sense of beauty that might once have made him human, but it had somehow gone astray. He worked like a machine to put his steel together; he understood it as a machine, and he had the machine's complete and automatic antipathy to anything in the way of the mechanism, or to any human quality that did not give way instantly to its needs. So they began to work together, Irish and the old man, and made a mat for the foundation where Irish had been digging: heavy square rods bent powerfully in at the ends, laid crosswise and knotted together with double wire. Slim, emptying a buggy of concrete over it later, watched the rust colour of the rods and the bright twinkle of the cut ends of the wire disappear under the flowing stone, with a surprised intensity of satisfaction that almost choked his breath for a moment. One part at least of the old man could be imprisoned, cast down and encased. But behind him were the scraping noises of more steel: a wall going up

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under the old man's hand. He backed the buggy away, spun it around, and caught a broken circle of sunlight glancing off the coil of wire that Irish carried round his neck and shoulder. He was in it too. Slim had forgotten that.

He was in it too. Under their fingers the rods were tied together until the steel grew up into a pattern of rectangles that stood as a graceful skeleton wall, swaying leisurely but with a rather sickening vibration if anyone or anything struck it or leaned upon it. At the top were the sharp, sheared ends of the vertical rods, each one looking a little like a rounded chisel. Irish, moving too quickly once, gashed his hand on one of them, and as he bound it up in his handkerchief he heard the old man grunt in impatience. The first edge of antagonism had shown through, but Irish was not looking for things like that. He was beginning to come home to his new self, and liking it. There was a certain quiet involved in the rudimentary craftsmanship needed for steel: he finished the wall on a greater reserve of well-being than he had known for a long time. The learning stiffened his fingers, but they were growing skilful. Even the old man had to admit, to others, that Irish was more than an amateur steelman, but for that reason he disliked him more. Looking at Irish as he stepped down from tying up the last of the horizontal rods and lit a cigarette, the old man felt himself suffused with indignation. He had been with the company too long to take the superintendent's rejects and enjoy it, and the fact that the man knew how to work by himself was worse. It made the old man feel somehow rejected, thrown away from the core of his job by an outsider who had no business with steel. Unknowing, Irish flicked the match through one of the rectangles in the wall-steel, and then with a grin of satisfaction struck the end vertical lightly once with his fist, as if he were giving a greeting to a friend, and watched the rather lurching sway that resulted travel down the wall till it ended in vibration and righted itself. It was a good job, a beginning. He was starting to move again. Flexing the fingers of his right hand, he looked over at the old man. He could never be trapped like that by the job now, for as he let himself be absorbed into it he was becoming free of it. He was lifting his head into a clearer kind of air, and it was good.

Slim, stripping forms, saw only the carelessness, the jaunty swing of the arms when Irish walked, or the lift of his head when

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something made him want to laugh while his hands were still intently and as if by touch working with the wire, his face almost irresponsibly at ease with itself. Slim became impatient with his admiration for it—but nothing now could turn him from the old man for long. It was so easy to watch and hate: never to lose track of where the old man was; to follow him with a taut, accusing stare; never to miss a scrap of evil. It hurt but it was needed.

Now the eastern half of the hospital was rising into a second storey, while the basement wall-steel of the western half was all in place. At a word from the superintendent the old man took Irish with him, and began to carry over the steel for the tower of metal scaffolding that was to stand at an inner angle of the building and support the hoist that would carry beams and concrete to the upper floors as they were built. The tower was to be seven storeys and more high, bolted together from standard-length pieces of end-flattened pipe, crossed with diagonals and mounted cube on cube like an open elevator shaft filled with cross-pieces. They piled the steel neatly between a mound of waste earth and the open framework of the wall-steel and began the next morning to raise the scaffolding beside it.

Irish soon found that this was a job into which he could relax completely, working silently and hard, and rising each day a little further from the ground and the other workmen, up into the warm city wind. He was cut free now from their regard, or their indifference, which had hung around him still on the ground. That was left behind, down with the sand and concrete, and the nails and wood, and he picked it up only with his lunch and paycheck, if he noticed it at all. Day by day the scaffolding stood higher, with the two men clambering around on planks on its rising top, or climbing up and down its tubular diagonals and horizontals, and up there in the stony glare of the sunlight Irish found himself able to live simply for himself, as himself, free from the need of having to be alive because someone was watching him live, or thinking of him living in any way. It was very quiet and steadying, and he had learned to like to get his muscles tired in some way more complex than by the backbreak of a shovel. So he climbed, and held steel in place while the old man bolted it, or bolted while the old man held, and they rose slowly into the air on cube after cube of steeply open steel. If he looked down at the job from the outer side of the tower he could see the hospital

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taking shape on the ground, gaining a floor, and columns, and wooden forms, and pushing out and up as if into a mould, with the dark lines of the scaffolding spread across the whole like an intricate perspective grid; and small men moving about between the bars, keeping even from five- and six-storey height their foreshortened individuality of clothes and movement, and the tops of heads, and the one small face craning upwards towards them, intermittently, and at every chance it had.

Slim was waiting now. When he saw the old man beginning to build the scaffold he felt that something was coming to a climax; when he saw that his partner was the still immune Irish he was sure of it, and the excitement of watching caught up a little more of his time. Suddenly, when the scaffold had risen into clear view above the level of the building hospital, he realized that he was the spectator of a battle to the death between the two men on the tower. He knew that there could be only one end, because the old man was like a monkey and knew his steel, so he watched, avidly, expecting every moment that it would be over, and wanting it to be over, because when it was over he would have his accusation, because he could bring the evil to a point then, and be done with it, and with all that had made for it.

This was not a normal battle. The old man could have no quarrel with Irish as a workman, but to stand isolated beside him for the whole day was another matter. The old man was not wise, or very knowing. What he saw of other people was only himself echoed; where nothing echoed all he could feel was a fog, and anger because of it; and to him Irish was a complete blank. Not even the fact that Irish was at home with steel, and could relish a dirty joke with the rest, made him familiar. It was like speech in another language, and it turned Irish into an enemy object. It soon came about that the old man was working as far away from Irish as the structure of the tower would allow. If Irish climbed up one side, the old man chose the other; or if he saw Irish climbing the same side below him, he would crab-walk around to the other side before he continued up. The gestures were petty and pointed, and they were meant to be noticed. Sometimes Irish saw them, and was a little amused at the importance of the old man. Sometimes Slim saw more.

He looked up so often now that two or three times the superintendent had come near to firing him, so on a warning he made

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his work more obvious, his upward glances swifter and more surreptitious; but with great caution he saw as much as he had before. Once he saw the old man lay out the planks for the platform on top of the sixth cube. They were loose planks, and almost all the overhang was carefully placed on Irish's side of the tower, where he might quite readily overbalance on one of them and fall, if the old man were not standing on the other end. Slim saw that there were a number of times when the old man stood carefully on a different plank.

The old man found no wrong in this; he hardly knew that he was doing it. It was the automaton's instinctive gesture of self-protection, for as it was the machine felt in danger of going to pieces with anger and a kind of shame. So he went on, setting slovenly traps of various petty kinds as a sop to his rage at having to work with this man. Nothing came of them, but there was not room enough in his awareness, after the anger and the skill of steel, for him even to be grateful that he was still working with a living man. And as yet the traps were by-products, casual things. The old man had not yet begun to neglect the steel to set them. But the time and the change came. Alone on a small platform of four planks high above the ground with a man whom his whole nature violently rejected, the old man began to be afraid. And Slim was too far below now to see it happen.

Nothing had touched Irish yet: he was relaxed and sure. He liked to stand and work in quiet on top of the noise of the job and not held by it. He had discovered freedom and relaxation in precision of movement, a luxury of muscular action that he could enjoy even when it tired him, and that was making every gesture deft and right. He found that he was going home at nights rested for the first time that he could remember. As his fingers guided a nut onto the shank of a bolt and spun it home, he knew that it was dizzying to stand so high, but somehow that was all a part of the exhilaration, and not danger. He had made peace now with himself. It was as if all the years of jockeying for position had been meant to come to rest here where thought and memory went for nothing against the sheer calm of a body alive and moving with ease and dignity about its work. The tower was narrow and high, and fell away to apparent nothing under their feet if they looked over at the job mapped below; they were well above the height of the old houses around them, and the

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level wind came at them hot with the heat of asphalt and slate and metal roofs. Sweat beaded his face and neck, but Irish, as the tug of the wrench changed the weight on his feet, balanced himself securely on the edges of his platform, and let himself rejoice.

Working beside him, the old man caught some of this, but against his will, for he could never bring it into focus except to feel that it was antagonistic. Here, in short, was a man who worked without his own proper galvanic abruptness, and who never cursed obscenity at the steel as a part of the ritual of putting it in its place. He told Irish loudly and profanely that his silence was not natural: for the foreign ways of this man had disrupted his whole routine. As he nursed his anger, the old man found that he was really cradling a fear. He caught himself making wrong movements, even mistakes; he found that he was hesitating. It had never happened to him before. Once he almost stepped off the platform, but caught himself violently and held onto a cross-piece for support and to glare across at his opponent, his face white and his legs shaking. But Irish had not seen him. Irish was giving a stubborn final tug to the wrench, with the beginning of a grin on his face, and looking down at the new labor foreman barking at the men on the job below. Savage and frightened, the old man promptly took refuge in contempt for his partner, and for revenge began to turn the hesitant and awkward work into which he had fallen into a point of strategy.

By now they were almost at the top of the tower, with only a cube and a half more to be put together, and Slim still watched, the more intently as he found it harder to see what was happening, his brain kept rank with surmise. Now Irish noticed that everything was being handed to him in the wrong way: lengths of steel were thrust at him wobbling and awkwardly held, so that he had to make a grab at them and risk losing his balance, or they were not held steadily in place while he tried to bolt them together; if he stepped back there was a loose pipe underfoot; if he handed anything to the old man the other would be sure not to see it at first, and then fumble it when he did see it. It was puzzling, because the old man had been a good workman before. Irish felt a touch of foreman's impatience creeping back. He tried to shrug it off, but the wilfulness of the old man's fumblings was just evident enough that he had to notice it, and the old man's enjoyment with it. It began to unsettle the foundations of his

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new quiet. Then the old man dropped a wrench and made Irish climb down to pick it up, and when he was climbing back something else fell and bounced off a cross-piece almost into his face. The old man laughed when he saw this, and seemed not bothered at all when Irish looked up and saw him. Slim, laying tile for the floor of the east wing, saw, and knew that there could be little more than a day left in the battle now. He hardly dared to stop watching.

Irish hung for a long minute where he was, seeing again the bolt or pocket knife or whatever it had been plummet past him and strike and shoot by over his shoulder. The metal of the pipe was still ringing, or his ears were. His hands felt slippery against the metal. It had never occurred to him that it might be possible to fall; now he clung to the steel and looked down. The ground seemed desperately far away for a moment, then subtly returned to its normal distance and appearance. He closed his eyes and looked up. Seven cubes of the tower shrank upwards away from him to the incomplete eighth at the top and a spattering of white cloud. The old man was out of sight. Slowly, very consciously, Irish began to climb again, testing his way.

There was silence when he climbed back up on the platform; he was breathing heavily and the old man was red in the face. He had thought briefly of asking the old man why he didn't watch what he was doing, but thought better of it because evidently the old man had been watching. Irish remembered the laugh, and so simply handed the wrench back to the old man without a word. He saw the old man was frightened, but he saw too that the old man was hard, and for the first time he felt insecure on top of his skeleton tower, and turned away to look across the city which was now permanently too far below where he was standing. He tried to make his nerves relax, but his heart was pounding heavily, almost erratically, and the pit of his stomach had gone dead. He could feel the muscles jumping in his arms and legs; then all at once everything that he was looking at blurred and his eyes were hot. Startled, he put his hand up, and felt a quick flush of tears coursing down his face. He had never known that so much could be taken away from him, even though it was nothing any more to lose a foreman's job. He was not yet forty, and yet because of this he could never call himself a young man again; and as he stood there, with the noise of the job passing him by, he was

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filled with an intense, suffocating regret—not for the harsh younger man who had been a foreman and been ended, because there had been nothing left of him from that day—but for the other man who had begun to be born then, who had gone and picked up the shovel and stayed on the job because there was nowhere else to go, and who had come to some part of his maturity in these last ten days of climbing in the air—because there was nothing left of him now either. The idyll had split wide open. If there had ever been a house founded upon the sand, he had been living in it. And all the pained worry that had been forgotten in those weeks came back at once. He had to blink his eyes dry. Here, with this ape of an old man beside him, he felt as if he had been stood in a harsh wind and systematically stripped until his naked mind was left to blunder by whatever way it could back into itself again, and he knew that he was lost. Looking down, he saw Slim stare up at him with a face the color of blanched sand, and the gaze, even at that distance, was so uncomfortable that he turned back to face the old man. "Come on," he said, foreman again, "get on with it. You're supposed to be working on this job."

The old man's face turned even more red, and then paled. Irish had turned on him. He bent to pick up one of the larger lengths of pipe, and as he straightened up with it his fear engulfed contempt and overwhelmed it. Blindly, mechanically, the machine had to break its operator or be broken, for he did not dare to lose any more control than he had already lost. He handed the end of the pipe firmly to Irish and they lifted it in place. Then, while Irish was fumbling with the bolt and holding the pipe in place with one uncertain hand (for all the ease had gone out of his actions and he felt as awkward as on the first day when he had used a shovel in the company of the men whose boss he had been), the old man dropped his end.

Irish felt the swift pull as the pipe tried to twist out of his fingers, and with a convulsive grip he kept it from falling, though as the sweat sprang into his palm the pipe started to slip. There were men working below. He stepped back quickly, tugging the pipe back onto the platform, but he had lost his security. He was afraid now to know how high he was, and how near the edge; and below, Slim, standing with a tile in his hands, looked up in terror. As Irish took another step back for balance and to finish pulling the pipe up on the planks, the old man in a panic attempt

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to undo what he had almost done, crouched and grabbed the other end of the pipe, and hauled it over the edge. Irish, in mid-step, staggered with the abrupt thrust of the pipe and threw his foot quickly sideways for support. Again, all the overhang was at his end, and the plank dipped. He wavered for a full second, seeing the old man squatting with the end of the pipe in his hands and his face dead grey, and then, with his brain clutching at everything that was not there to hold, he overbalanced and fell, rolling through the air like a sprawling star. He was thirty-nine years old.

Slim screamed, and the body ended its fall on the vertical pieces of the wall-steel. One of them punctured the head. As everything on the job veered and froze Slim threw his tile away and it broke. "He pushed him!" he shouted wildly. "He pushed him! I saw!" His time had come.

The superintendent could only stare and think of words he had said because a man was too like himself.

"He pushed him!" And then all Slim's hatred of the old man came frothing out, incoherent and hysterical, while the blood ran down the swaying steel. But even while the words spewed out, in some clear corner of his screaming brain he saw for good and all that sand would still be in his skin and his money dirty; that tobacco would go on falling out of his cigarettes and beer make him even colder now; and that his women would always show him to a hot disheveled bed. There was no good in it at all, and no way out. He shook himself into a hiccuping silence—his outburst could have been no more than a few seconds long—and said again with a shaking voice, but a voice very penetrating and quiet, "The old man pushed him off. I was watching. Make him come down."

But someone else was screaming now, a grey blur of a face peering from the unfinished top of the tower-scaffolding down onto the impaled body of Irish Johnston and the crowd around it. "I only dropped the pipe!" it was crying, all profanity gone, while its owner, stricken on hands and knees, crumpled up inside like a crushed machine: "I only dropped the pipe!"

No one believed him.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

Autumnall

You walk the floor of autumn where her corpse,
Four feet of leaves, decays like rotting fur.
Her immense limbs shift with the strewing wind
And in the scattering mounds the furious horse
Plunge and veer, racing through such flesh.

She cups the flame of autumn in her flesh
Where thick and settled carnage stops the wind.
The smoke suffuses from her wasting corpse
From paleness hidden deep within this fur
And urine stains the leaves beneath the horse.

O sense the massive blending of these horse
As one by one they sink beneath the flesh.
It is the slow liquescence of the fur;
It is the thickened burning of the corpse.
O all this plumage loosened by the wind.

Evolving gases in the fluent wind
Abstract the memories of sunken horse;
The trees, the blinding trees, that cast their flesh.
The leaves erode within the fusing corpse;
The fissures blaze along the drifts of fur.

Endure the spurting grapes within this fur;
Endure the fuels, the thickened fuels of flesh.
The gases drench the eyes of strangled horse.
The flames, spouting in the pores of wind,
Have seized the focussed phrasing of the corpse.

The corpse in flames, all naked to the wind,
The smouldering horse, diffused in fur,
The leaves, the quenching leaves that drown upon the flesh.

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MORTIMER SLAIMAN

Autumn Before Sunrise

Through the soaked weed, through the crisp air
the furry wing-sung message beating
beating home the nest falling
pilot black, flushed
its fiery green yellow breast
peeled off the palette.

In the rush waits the hunter.
Limed by the dead sun waits the painter.

Skimming low, the water rippling up
a wrinkled underbelly
the wings flail. . .

The hunter's cocktail eye froze the air
sighted dead the plunging bird
setting its animal eye on a beating nest.

One flowery shot squeezed oblique stilled
the hunter's heart and drowned the bird.

The painter tipped his brush into the nest
and set new wings beating, hate again rising
the hunter trembled and drowned the bird
of the painter's brush and drowned the bird.

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JOHN DUNCAN PRESTON

A Family Town

IN THE PORTSMOUTH CLUB, a tavern in the St. John's district of Portland, Oregon, two men both in their early thirties sat at the bar drinking beer. It was a Saturday afternoon in late October, and they had all the time in the world. They were tall, slim, pleasant-looking individuals with healthy, clear white skin, sensitively cut features, and the mild voices common to certain North-Westerners.

A young woman entered the tavern and perched on a stool next to one of them.

"Hello," she said rather coyly and feebly.

"Hello yourself," he calmly replied and continued talking to his friend, Lynn Beardon, who had not even turned his head. So she slipped off the stool and came over to his side.

"Well *hello*," she said again.

The bartender, who had been watching, intervened now, advising her to stop annoying them and get the hell out of the place.

"Listen you bastard, I'm his wife. I'm Mrs. Lynn Beardon."

"Is that so?" said the bartender, his face reddening a little.

Beardon nodded his head in silent assent.

"Say mister, I'm sorry. Will you please accept my sincere apology?"

For an answer he gripped the man's hand firmly in his own and smiled at him.

"You could have done better than that."

"Helen, not here," he said warningly.

"What a dud you turned out to be!"

"I said not here, not now."

Standing up suddenly he took her by the arm, and they walked out of the tavern together.

"We'll see you," the bartender called out anxiously after them.

Once outside on the sidewalk she shook herself free and stood there trembling with rage.

"What are you planning to do this time?" he asked.

"Good! Now you've got eyes for me, *Mister Beardon.* Now you're not looking away as though I were funny or dead."

"Helen, please come home with me," he said more gently.

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"No, I've made other arrangements for the week-end," she said, cold and important once more. "First I'm going over to Madge's and wash my hair at her place. Then we're going for a nice, long drive in the country in her convertible with the top down."

"Isn't it a little late in the year?"

But she turned her back on him and started running down the street. He watched her for a minute and then walked home alone to his brand new white wood bungalow on the corner of Fiske and Princeton. Letting himself in by the back door he saw the remains of breakfast, a pile of unwashed dishes stacked up in the sink. He hurried into the bedroom and found his eleven month old son fast asleep in a playpen in one corner. What to do next? A photograph of Helen set in a Woolworth frame caught his eye, and going over to the bureau he picked it up and held it cupped in his hands. It was an enlarged, colored snapshot of her taken six years ago on a war-time summer afternoon. She was standing on the lawn in front of her aunt's house and wore no clothing aside from two large sombreros held directly and prudently in front of her. Down over bared shoulders flowed unbound auburn hair, and her smile was specifically prepared for overseas consumption. Beardon occasionally wondered as to the precise whereabouts of her aunt, the day *that* picture was taken.

Three o'clock struck now. Saturday afternoon was his time for visiting with his family down on Sauvies Island, and he did not intend to neglect them today. He telephoned the Carters next door, and Ellen Carter volunteered to come over and mind the baby for the afternoon.

It was a long ride down to the island, the only other occupants of the bus being a middle-aged man and his daughter, sitting near the driver. The man was tall and lean and wore a grey overcoat, a red flannel shirt open at the throat, and a pair of corduroy trousers. There was an interested smile on his face as he gazed down at his thoughtful, long-legged daughter sitting beside him. At the next stop Harry Canby, Beardon's sixteen year old cousin, got on board. He was on his way to his weekly mission class, and his eyes shone as he talked about it.

"Teaching you anything remarkable there?" asked Beardon.

"They tell us to heed the dictates of that light which shines on every man," the boy rebuked him. "For who does not live in a perishing condition all his life?"

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Like words from his grandfather's sermons, he thought, an old man's anger set down in prim, beautiful handwriting in the battered, black notebook his mother used to show them rainy Sunday evenings.

The bus slowed down; the great St. John's extension bridge swung into view. Beyond lay the meadow where the girl had been murdered last summer. The young killer had kept her there all night and in the morning had finally made up his mind to strangle her. It was a scene of peace today. There was not much shipping on the river and few signs of life at the oil storage tanks where the boats from California unloaded their cargoes.

"This is where I get off, Harry. Come and see me. You know where I live."

The boy squeezed his arm affectionately.

"Don't forget now. Read your Bible!"

Beardon stood there for a moment by the bus stop. It was pleasant being in the country again with the smell of rain and timber in the air. He had lost sight of the river, but he could still see the steel pylons, shining in the grey light, built high above the water so as to clear the boats. Dark masses of firs and mountains rose against the sky, and thin, fiery clouds of willow and gorse were spread out on their slopes.

He walked about half a mile until he came to a boat house, then crossed over to the island on a leisurely little ferry. It had rained hard the week before, and the river had risen five or six feet since his last visit. Behind him in a car were two state troopers out scouting for poachers, and a pair of brightly colored China pheasants ran back into the woods at the sound of their motor.

The Beardon farm—main house, silos, and barns—was built on a broad shelf of land bordered by grey sand dunes and the Columbia River itself. When his great-grandfather had come out here in 1860, his first act was to buy up half a squatter's land grant of three hundred and twenty acres. Indians in their canoes were still to be seen on the river then, and Indian skulls still turned up occasionally during the spring ploughing.

But now the land lay quiet and fallow. The only sounds on the air came from a flock of crows circling and cawing above a grove of walnut trees. Beardon found his father—a tall, broad shouldered old man with keen eyes, and hair raven-black and thick and smooth as a wig—standing in the front yard playing a hose on a pile of stones to free them from gravel and sand. Later they would be used in constructing a floor for the small barn. He

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looked up with a pleased, shrewd expression when he saw his son and told him he would find his mother in the kitchen.

Actually Mrs. Beardon was relaxing in the parlor for once. She had a newspaper in her hand, and she rocked back and forth reading selected items from its pages to her brother, Will Salter. He sat there stiffly upright, his ancient knees thin and stiff as boards as he warmed a handful of walnuts over the stove.

"Ma, what's wrong? You're taking it easy for once."

"Lynn! I thought you'd be down to see us sooner or later."

He kissed his mother dutifully and greeted his uncle Willie, whom he had always liked.

"Helen didn't come with you by any chance?"

"No, Mother."

"I always featured she liked her own friends and her own part of town best. Is Mrs. Grant visiting you soon?"

"I hope to god no. Twice before she's come to stay with us, and twice she's tried to break up our home."

"It's not Helen's mother then this time?" she said pointedly.

But he simply turned his head away from her.

"How about you, Uncle Willie? Speak up, man. How've you been keeping?"

His uncle, who had begun nodding by the stove, looked up happily at the sound of his voice.

"I've been hearing you, don't worry. Why I've been well but restless. This mild weather's got me done in for sure."

"Mild!"

"Lynn," said Mrs. Beardon. "Did you ever know a Frank Weld at high school?"

"Might've. I can't place that name though."

"It says here a *Frank Weld* of *Salem* aged thirty-seven was appointed assistant manager of the Evans Dairy Products."

"No," he shook his head indifferently.

"I used to see his mother if that's the same one I'm thinking of. She was a member of our Central Lodge. Maybe Helen knew him."

"Helen knew a lot of people before we were married, Mother," he said looking up at her with a grin. "She certainly knew me."

"Thirty-seven years old," she went on as though she had not heard him. "Karl would have been thirty-nine in December. Oh, Lynn, you don't know what it's like to have your own flesh go like that."

"I guess I don't."

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"And the night they brought me to him when he was lying there and I knelt beside him and pulled open one of his eyes and then I cried 'O my God my son is dying', and they didn't believe me not one of them, not even the doctor!"

He was silent now. Memory like a hand had fallen on him, turning him back to confront once more the clear, unhesitating image of his older brother killed at the age of twenty by a rabbit punch in an exhibition match at the Y.

"Don't you remember the funeral with the Boy Scouts and the Buglers and how weeks afterwards when they couldn't find me around the farm here they'd send a truck down to the cemetery for me?" his mother exulted. "At least he's with God."

"What's the old lady telling you now?" said Mr. Beardon, entering the room. "Is she telling you we're all in the hands of God? Well we're not. We're in the hands of them Jewish war lords in Washington."

"Andrew, how can you talk like that? I'm trying to give Lynn a nice quiet home afternoon here. Can't you tell it's what he needs?"

They talked for a while longer, and then she went into the kitchen and made coffee. They drank it in silence broken only by the easy breathing of the stove. It seemed more like Sunday afternoon than Saturday, Beardon thought. It always did out here. The silence, the sound of the stove, the smell of his father's pipe. The massively framed group photographs on the wall, the hand-carved myrtlewood table—his mother's pride and joy—with the lace cover on top of it, the books on the small shelf nailed up by the door. *Mrs. Miniver, Up Front, Home Readings from The Bible.*

By the time they had finished their coffee, it was six o'clock. They asked him to stay for dinner, but he told them he had to get back to his son.

"You could always bring him down to us," said Mrs. Beardon. "We'll look after him any time."

"I may hold you to that, Mother, but I want him with me now. I'll work it out somehow."

"Anyways be good."

"Lynn's always good," his uncle chuckled.

"So long Ma, see you next week. Look after Uncle Willie there."

"Lynn."

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"Yes, Mother."

"You know this may sound kind of foolish, but you always were my child the way none of your brothers ever were. You're the one I feel who's always claimed me."

"Goodbye Mother," he said, sensing her triumph, and hurried from the room. His father called to him from the hallway. He had recently bought a thirty-caliber Winchester and wanted to show it off. Beardon raised the rifle to his shoulders and looked through the sights.

"Comes up nice, Dad."

"Don't it though?"

"Real nice."

"I'd sure like to pull down an elk with it one of these days. Lynn, couldn't we go off on a trip together next month, just you and me?"

"It's a swell idea; I could ask them at the office about it Monday."

"That's all right, Son, but keep in touch with us." He laid a hand on his shoulder and looked at him anxiously, attentively.

A few minutes later Beardon walked slowly down the road that led from the farm to the ford. When he reached the main highway, he had a ten minute wait for the bus, so he lit a cigarette and gazed about him. It was sundown now with the mountains pure and dark against the faded, museum color of the sky. The wind had fallen, and the crows were still cawing in the distance. In two more months it would be winter, and already there was a hint of winter in the air, a feeling not of death or decay but of things bound fast for all time beyond the influence of weather or seasons.

"Heard any scores today?" the conductor asked him cheerfully, counting out his change. Beardon did not want to talk to him, however, and sat well in the rear of the bus. Five years ago at this time of year he had been a lieutenant in the Infantry, travelling eastward on his way to the ETO. He remembered now his week's leave in Paris and the French family he had come to know then. Looking out the window he could see the houses lighting up on the hills across the water. All cities look alike at night. From a distance at least.

Back in St. John's once more the bus let him off near his house. It was a clear, black October evening with trees standing out brilliantly under the lamp light. One tree spread a canopy of chill

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lemon-tinted leaves over his head. There was an onrush of new life on the streets now that night and autumn had come, a sense of pluck and vigor and alacrity. Clear-eyed, limber old men strode towards the pool rooms, and small Chinese boys in football uniforms chased each other down the street to the nearest soda fountain. A small crowd had gathered in front of the Portsmouth Club where a grave pageant was being held, the unloading of the frozen corpse of a deer from a station wagon. The Club was the center of life in this part of town; the shops all around it were blazing with lighted displays of red and green mackinaws, hunting and fishing gear.

When Beardon opened the door of his own house, he found a changed atmosphere inside. Ellen the baby-sitter had washed all the dishes, cleaned the rooms, and made the beds in addition to her other chores. She was a serious, pink-cheeked girl, majoring in music at High School, and she refused the extra money he offered her for her help.

After the front door closed behind her, the house seemed suddenly empty and silent, but waiting for him in the living room was the baby, glowingly clean, freshly bathed and diapered, sprawling on the carpet near the fire. When he saw his father, he cried out and tried to struggle to his feet, clinging to the leg of a chair.

"My son, my son," said Beardon wonderingly and swept him up in his arms.

"Going to beat the whole world, aren't you?"

His voice echoed in the deserted house.

"Some day?"

He blew a wisp of hair off the child's forehead and continued watching him. Then the telephone rang, and his heart began a quick, loud beating as he picked up the receiver. It was only a conversation on the party line. She would not call tonight, but she would come back, or he would go and find her. He knew better now; he would try and help her more. Their marriage might even be a source of the strength and patience that had evaded him for so long. Besides he *wanted* her back! Still holding the baby propped against his shoulder he stood there, head lowered, eyes closed, certain of nothing but the simple value of his own existence.

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YVOR WINTERS

The Audible Reading of Poetry

My title may seem to have in it something of the jargon of the modern Educationist; if so, I am sorry, but I mean to indicate something more than the reading of poetry aloud. I mean to indicate the reading of poetry not merely for the sensual ear, but for the mind's ear as well; yet the mind's ear can be trained only by way of the other, and the matter, practically considered, comes inescapably back to the reading of poetry aloud.

For the matter of that, it is equally important to learn to read prose aloud, and to hear the prose when one reads it silently. Melville, Gibbon, or Samuel Johnson about equally will be lost on us if we do not so hear them. Yet the readers are numerous who hear nothing when they read silently and who are helpless in their efforts to read aloud: some of them have defective sensibilities; some have merely never been trained; some have been trained by one or another of our psychological educationists to read in this fashion in order that they may read more rapidly. That they can read more rapidly without hearing, I believe there is no doubt, especially if the matter with which they are dealing is trivial. The trouble is that the activity cannot properly be called reading. Such "readers" are barbarians; literature is closed to them, in spite of the fact that they may think otherwise. The scholar or critic who appears to have read everything has commonly understood very little, and his failure to hear is one of the reasons.

My subject may seem a bit precious and tenuous, but it is neither; it is a matter of the utmost importance to the proper understanding of poetry, a matter fully as important as the philosophical speculation and learned paraphrasing of the New Critics, of whom I am sometimes reputed to be one. It is a matter of which there is almost no understanding at the present time.

Poetry, as nearly as I can understand it, is a statement in words about a human experience, whether the experience be real or hypothetical, major or minor; but it is a statement of a particular kind. Words are symbols for concepts, and the philosopher or scientist endeavors as far as may be to use them with reference to nothing save their conceptual content. Most words, however, connote feelings and perceptions, and the poet, like the writer of imaginative prose, endeavors to use them with reference not only to their denotations but to their connotations as well. Such writers endeavor to communicate not only concepts, arranged, presumably, either in rational order or in an order apprehensible by the rational mind, but the feeling or emotion which the rational content ought properly to arouse. The poet differs from the writer of any kind of prose in that he writes in metrical language. Any good prose is rhythmical up to a certain point: even purely expository prose should be rhythmical to the point that audible obstructions are minimized and meanings are empha-

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sized; the prose of such a writer as Melville is far more elaborately rhythmical than this. But a rhythm which is not controlled by a definite measure will be relatively loose and lacking in subtlety. Poetry and music are based upon definite measure; in this they differ from all other forms of composition.

Rhythm and meter, it should be observed, are quite distinct from each other, in spite of the fact that many critics (myself among them) sometimes use the two words as if they meant the same thing. Meter is the arithmetical norm, the purely theoretic structure of the line; rhythm is controlled departure from that norm. The iambic pentameter norm, for example, proceeds as follows:

One *two,* one *two,* one *two,* one *two,* one *two.*

Yet no other line in the language corresponds exactly to the line just given; and to achieve another as regular, one will have to resort to the same repetitive structure with a new pair of syllables. Every other line will depart from this one for these reasons: no two syllables ever have the same degree of accent—that is, so far as versification is concerned there is no such thing as an inherently accented or unaccented syllable, but syllables which count technically as accented can be recognized as such only with reference to the other syllable or syllables within the same foot; secondly, although quantity or syllable-length has no part in the measure, it is, like accent, infinitely variable and it affects the rhythm; and thirdly, feet of other types may be substituted for iambic feet, at least within reason. As I have said, rhythm results from the proper control and manipulation of these sources of variation.

Now rhythm is in a measure expressive of emotion. If the poet, then, is endeavoring to make a statement in which rational understanding and emotion are properly related to each other, metrical language will be of the greatest advantage to him, for it will provide him with a means of qualifying his emotion more precisely than he could otherwise do, of adjusting it more finely to the rational understanding which gives rise to it. The rational and emotional contents of the poem thus exist simultaneously, from moment to moment, in the poem; they are not distinct, but are separable only by analysis; the poet is not writing in language which was first conceptual and then emotionalized, nor in prose which has been metered; he is writing in poetical language. And the rhythm of the poem permeates the entire poem as pervasively as blood permeates the human body: remove it and you have a corpse. It is for this reason that the audible reading of poetry is quite as important as the philosophical understanding of poetry; without audible reading, and adequate audible reading, you simply do not have poetry.

We are thus confronted with the question of what constitutes adequate audible reading. From what I have just said, it should be obvious that adequate audible reading will be reading in which the rhythm of the poem is rendered intact, without the sacrifice of any other element. But what variety of reading will best achieve this end, and what are some of the problems which arise in connection with it?

Since I am defending an unpopular cause, I shall not scruple to avail myself

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of eminent support. In looking over the *Selected Writings* of Paul Valéry recently issued by New Directions, I found Valéry writing as follows:

> . . . . in studying a piece of poetry one intends to recite, one should not take as source or point of departure ordinary conversation and common parlance, in order to rise from this level of prose to the desired poetic tone: but, on the contrary, I thought one should take song as a base, and should put oneself in the state of a singer; adjust one's voice to the plenitude of musical sound, and from there descend to the somewhat less resonant state suitable to verse. This, it seemed to me, was the only way to preserve the musical essence of poems. Above all, the voice must be placed quite away from prose, and the text studied from the point of view of necessary attack, modulation, sustained tone, little by little, lowering this musical disposition, which in the beginning one has exaggerated, to bring it down to the proportions of poetry. . . . above all do not be in a hurry to arrive at the meaning. Approach it without effort and, as it were, insensibly. And only in or by means of the music attain to tenderness or to violence. . . . Remain in this pure musical state until such time as the meaning, appearing little by little, can no longer mar the musical form. You will introduce it at the end as the supreme nuance that will transfigure the passage without altering it.[1]

This appears to be a plea for a restrained but formal chant, in which a sustained tone and movement will serve as an impersonal but definite base for subtle variation. It is only by such a reading, for example, that *Le Cimetière Marin* can be rendered; it is only by a man who so read that such a poem could have been written.

A poem in the very nature of the case is a formal statement; and the reading of a poem is thus a formal occasion. A poem is not conversation; neither is it drama. Conversation is in general the least premeditated and least rhythmical of human utterance; and it depends very heavily upon intonations and even gestures and facial expressions which are not at the disposal of the poet. Dramatic speech is merely more or less formalized conversation. Dramatic poetry, of course, presents a special problem, and one with which I shall not at present concern myself, though it is closer to the kind of poetry with which I am dealing than it is to dramatic prose, and I agree with Valéry that it is commonly botched by the actors. I believe that it would be possible to read dramatic poetry satisfactorily with regard both to its dramatic and to its poetic natures, but I have never heard it so read. I have never witnessed a performance of Shakespeare without more of pain than of profit or of pleasure. I have been repeatedly reminded of a story told by W. B. Yeats of the great Shakespearean actor of whom it was said that he read Shakespeare so perfectly that no one could tell it was poetry. In general I think the world would be well enough

[1]Extracts from "*A Discourse on the Declamation of Verse*", by Paul Valéry, translated by Louise Varèse. *Paul Valéry, Selected Writings*, New Directions, 1950.

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off without actors: they appear to be capable of any of three feats—of making the grossly vulgar appear acceptably mediocre; of making the acceptably mediocre appear what it is; and of making the distinguished appear acceptably mediocre. In any event, they cannot read poetry, for they try to make it appear to be something else, something, in brief, which they themselves can understand.

A poem calls for a formal reading, partly because the poem is of its own nature a formal statement, and partly because only such a reading will render the rhythm with precision. Furthermore, it is only with a formal tone as a basis that variations of tone within the poem can be rendered with precision: without such a formal tone to unify the poem, the poem becomes merely a loose assortment of details. The situation here is precisely analogous to that which I have described elsewhere[2] with regard to rhythm and meter: the firmer the metric structure, the more precise can be the rhythmic variations, and the greater the effect obtainable with a very slight variation; whereas if the structure is loose the variations lack significance.

A formal reading which avoids dramatic declamation will necessarily take on something of the nature of a chant. This kind of reading itself has dangers, however, for the reader may carry the procedure so far as to appear precious, and worse, he may deform syllables in the interests of what he considers musical intonation, much as a musical composer will draw syllables out or hurry over them in setting a poem to music. I never heard the late W. B. Yeats read aloud, but I have been told that he was guilty of both of these vices: if it is true that he was guilty of them, one has some reason to suspect that he never properly heard his own poems, a fact which may have been responsible for a number of curious rhythmical mishaps which are scattered through his works. A poem should, on the contrary, be conceived as having a movement of its own, an autonomous movement, which should be rendered as purely and as impersonally as possible. The reader has no more right to revise the rhythms in the interest of what he considers an effective presentation than he has a right to revise any other aspects of the language. The poem, once set in motion, should appear to move of its own momentum.

A more or less recent poet who went farther than any other has gone in deforming the inherent rhythmic elements in our language and so rendering the structure of his poems indecipherable is Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins held a theory of dramatic or declamatory reading, and I suspect from a few passages in his prose that he combined this with a theory of musical intonation. Hopkins was an eccentric and extremely egoistic man, and he worked in isolation. He apparently failed to realize that his own dramatic and musical deformations of language were not based on universal principles but were purely private. As a result one can often be only dumfounded when he indicates his intentions by metrical signs, and one often can be only baffled when he

[2] "The Influence of Meter on Poetic Convention", in *Primitivism and Decadence*, the essay on John Crowe Ransom, Section IX, in *The Anatomy of Nonsense*, both reprinted in *In Defense of Reason*.

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fails to do so. In *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, for example, Hopkins uses an extremely long line, which, if it is read with normal accentuation, produces the effect of a loosely irregular but still readable verse. He does not provide us with many accent marks until he is about halfway through the poem; from there on he provides marks in abundance, frequently with strange results. The last two lines will serve as illustration:

> *But thése two; wáre of a wórld where bút these / twó tell,*
> *each off the óther; of a rack*
> *where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe-and shelterless, /*
> *thóughts agáinst thoughts in groans grind.*

We have here a kind of bad writing which is purely the result of bad reading; and even the best reading, if superimposed upon what the poet offers, can salvage the poem but very imperfectly.

In T. S. Eliot's reading of *The Waste Land*, as we have it on the recordings issued by The Library of Congress, we have another kind of dramatic reading, and conceivably a relationship between the way of reading and the way of writing. In those portions which exhibit a more or less definite rhythmic structure—for example, in *Death by Water*—Eliot reads more or less in the fashion which I am recommending, with a minimum of dramatic improvement on the text, and with a maximum of attention to movement. But in those portions of the poem—and they are the greater part of it—in which the rhythm does not cohere, in which the poem tends to fall apart in sandy fragments, Eliot reads dramatically; he does this with a great deal of skill, but most of what he puts into his voice is not in the poem—he descends to the practice of the actor who is salvaging a weak text. It would be interesting to know whether Eliot devised this mode of reading in order to rescue a weak poem, or whether the weak poem resulted in part from his having come gradually to employ such a mode of reading, so that he tended to see in his text as he was composing it something which he was not actually getting down on paper. This latter procedure in any event probably accounts for a good deal of the unrealized poetry of our time. For example, Randall Jarrell's reading of his poem *Lady Bates*, in The Library of Congress series, is very dramatic, very emotional, and very bad: I am unable to hear it without the conviction that Jarrell felt his emotions about his subject so readily and so uncritically that he did not trouble himself to write the poem. The poem itself is formless and dull.

The dependence upon superimposed rhythms or other effects which we get in a grotesque form in some of Hopkins and in a more skillful form in Eliot's reading of *The Waste Land* can lead to an astonishing degree of imperception on the part of critics (which is merely an impressive way of saying on the part of readers). In the volume entitled *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by the Kenyon Critics, Mr. Harold Whitehall informs us that from about the year 1300 English poetry has become less and less amenable to being read aloud, because

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less and less rhythmical. And in another volume on Hopkins, edited by Norman Weyand, S.J., and written by a group of Jesuits, a volume entitled *Immortal Diamond,* Walter J. Ong arrives at similar conclusions. Both of these writers believe that there is no real rhythm without heavy stress; both believe that meter is based on declamatory rather than mechanical stress. Ong gives us no clue as to how we are to recognize our stressed syllables, and he fails to explain how Hopkins arrived at any of the stresses which he marked. Whitehall gives us his own system of stressing Hopkins, but it is quite as arbitrary as that of Hopkins, and when Whitehall's marked passages are finished we are left with no means of proceeding. Ong, convinced that there is no fine rhythm without heavy and obvious stress, is oblivious to the sensitivity of Sidney and the post-Sidneyan metrists, and equally to the structural principles of their verse; and his concept of reading aloud is indicated by the following passage: "If the poem calls for shouting, the shouting need not be kept imaginary for fear the beat of the rhythm will go. Shout, declaim, and you will only have thrust this rhythm home. So, too, if the shout should need to die to a whisper. . . ." This clerical type of rendition strikes me as about equally impractical, insensitive, and indecorous.

Nevertheless, rhetorical stress has a certain relationship to the structure of meter, but it is not the relationship sought by Hopkins. As I have already said, the language does not divide itself evenly into accented and unaccented syllables, but there is almost infinite variation in degrees of accent. For this reason, the basic rule of English scansion is this: that the accented syllable can be determined only in relationship to the other syllable or syllables within the same foot. The accented syllable of a given foot, as we shall eventually see, may be one of the lightest syllables in its line. But with this rule as a reservation, we may go on to say that poetic meter must be constructed out of the inherent (or mechanical) accentual materials of the language, so that the accented syllable of a foot will be naturally heavier than the unaccented; and if the poet desires to indicate a rhetorical stress he should do it by a metrical stress, or if he is using two syllables either of which might receive heavier stress than the other, then the rhetorical stress should fall where the reader as a result of the previously established pattern will expect the metrical stress.

Keats neglects these considerations in the first line of his last sonnet. The inexpert reader who endeavors to render this line conversationally or dramatically will read it as if he were a sociable lady addressing another sociable lady at a party:

Bright star, would Í were steadfast as thóu art,

and the rhythm is destroyed along with the possibility of a proper rhyme. The fault, however, lies largely with Keats. It is natural to stress the two contrasting pronouns somewhat, although one need not carry the stress all the way to the ridiculous. Furthermore, on the first pronoun the metrical stress indicates the rhetorical, so that the two are not in conflict. If we consider the words

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Would I in isolation, we shall see that so far as their mechanical properties are concerned, either can be stressed at the expense of the other; however, in this line the stressing of *would* would result in an inverted foot in the second position, and although inversion is possible in this position, it is difficult and generally unlikely, so that we naturally expect the stress to fall on *I*, which likewise is the natural recipient of the rhetorical stress. If we employ the four words *Would I were steadfast* in isolation, the stress may fall variously according to our meaning: if we are implying a contrast betwen steadfastness and our lack of it, the heaviest stress falls on *would;* if we are implying a contrast between steadfastness and another particular quality, a light stress falls on *would* and a heavy on *stead*; if we are implying a contrast between our own lack of steadfastness and the steadfastness of another, the heavy stress falls on *I*, as in the actual line, but if, as in this line, the comparison is completed, an equal stress should fall on the second pronoun; but since this pronoun also is coupled with a verb which is mechanically its equal and on the basis of its inherent nature could as well take the accent, and since the foot ends the line, and a rhymed line at that, the accent must fall on *art*. This blunder by Keats could scarcely have occurred as a result of his reading poetry in a dramatic fashion, for he understood the structure of English poetry very well, and had he read the line dramatically he would have noticed the error. It probably occurred as a result of his reading with a somewhat mechanical scansion, so that he failed to observe that the meaning was struggling with the meter. One can read it, of course, by means of a more or less evasive glide, but it constitutes an unhappy moment.

One can observe a related difficulty in the sixth line of Wordsworth's sonnet *Upon Westminster Bridge*:

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie.

The first four words of this line are coördinate in grammatical function and in importance, and in ordinary prose the first four syllables would be indistinguishable to the ear in the matter of accent. The average reader, if asked to mark the scansion of this poem, will indicate two spondees at the beginning of the line, but the first two feet are not spondaic—in spite of everything they are iambic. The truly spondaic foot is extremely rare in English; presently I shall have occasion to illustrate it, but for the present I shall merely describe it. It can occur as a variant in iambic verse, only if the accented syllables in the iambic feet are heavily accented and the unaccented are very light, and only if the caesural pause is heavily marked; and these conditions must prevail not merely in the line in question, but throughout much of the poem. The true spondee is a violent aberration—it is a form of what Hopkins calls sprung rhythm—and it is possible only where the rhythm is heavy and obvious. It can be found at least as early as Barnabe Googe and as late as the songbooks of John Dowland, and within these limits it may conceivably be found in as

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many as thirty poems, but I think it will be difficult to find it elsewhere except in the work of Gerard Hopkins, although something approaching it occurs occasionally in Henry Vaughan. In this sonnet by Wordsworth an extremely smooth iambic movement has been established in the first five lines, so effectively established that it dominates the sixth line, and almost any reader who is aware of rhythm at all will be forced to impose a very light iambic emphasis on the first two feet of the sixth line; to do otherwise will bring the poem apart in ruins. This can be done, and since the poem (unlike the poem by Keats) is worth saving, it must be done; but the difficulty indicates a defect in the poem, and a defect again which probably stems from faulty reading on the part of the poet. The difficulty is enhanced by the length of the syllables (a length increased by the commas) and by the all but insufferable series of dentals.

The relationship of rhetorical stress to metrical stress, and hence to reading, would appear, then, to be real, although the relationship can obviously be abused. Perhaps I should conclude the matter by offering these rules for poet and reader alike: (1) There should be no conflict between rhetorical stress and metrical stress, but in so far as it is possible the metrical stress should point the meaning; (2) where the mechanical potentialities of the language indicate the possibility of a stress in either of two directions, the grammatical structure should be so definite that a certain rhetorical stress will be unmistakable and will force the metrical interpretation in the right direction; and (3) the reader should deal with rhetorical stresses with the utmost restraint—he should indicate them as far as the occasion requires, but he should not become enthusiastic, undignified, or unmetrical about them. They are not to be superimposed upon the basic rhythm, nor can the basic rhythm be constructed from them.

I would like next to illustrate the importance of reading, by illustrating certain very marked differences in rhythm which may occur within the limits of the iambic pentameter line. English verse is predominantly iambic in structure, and although this fact has irritated certain poets and stirred them to curious experiments, the fact that so vast a number of eminent poets have found the iambic movement more useful than any other must have some kind of explanation. In the anapestic or dactyllic foot the accented syllable must be definitely heavy or the identity of the foot and of the line will disappear, and this necessity makes for monotony and a jingling obviousness:

> *I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;*
> *I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three. . . .*

The unequivocally trochaic line tends to exhibit some of the same heaviness (as in *Hiawatha,* for example) although the reason for this is less clear. The seven-syllable tetrameter line may be described as trochaic, with a monosyllabic foot in the last position, or as iambic with a monosyllabic foot in the first position; since it is frequently used as a variant on iambic tetrameter, the second classification would seem the better. When this line is used throughout a poem,

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the poem will be short, or else will become monotonous: the accents again are usually heavy most of the time, and although the meter may be used in a short poem for the purpose of obtaining a semi-songlike effect, it appears to have few other uses. The iambic movement, however, appears to be natural to the language; it asserts itself easily, and the poet does not have to hammer his accents out to maintain it. This situation allows the poet to vary the degrees of his accents widely, to vary his cesuras, and to employ substitution with a certain freedom. Contrary to the views of Mr. Whitehall and of Father Ong, this type of meter lends itself very well to audible reading, but one must first know how to read. And when well written and well read it is far more flexible and perceptive than any other kind of English verse thus far devised.

My first example is by Barnabe Googe and was written early in the reign of Elizabeth, before the advent of Spenser and Sidney:

Give money me, take friendship who so list,
For friends are gone, come once adversity,
When money yet remaineth safe in chest
That quickly can thee bring from misery;
Fair face show friends, when riches do abound,
Come time of proof, farewell they must away;
Believe me well, they are not to be found,
If God but send thee once a lowring day.
Gold never starts aside, but in distress,
Finds ways enough to ease thine heaviness.

This poem has certain characteristics which one would expect to find in a period in which the pentameter line was new, when the misunderstandings of Wyatt had been only recently overcome: first of all there are no inverted feet and no trisyllabic feet; secondly the accented syllables are almost all heavy and of nearly the same weight—there are only two feet in the poem in which the accented syllables are noticeably light; thirdly the cesuras are all heavily marked, and in six of the ten lines they fall at the end of the second foot. The poem shows only one type of variation; that is, the use of spondaic feet (or what I have elsewhere called syllabic sprung meter). The introduction of this variation into the newly acquired iambic pentameter line is Googe's principal contribution to the technique of English verse, and it is a contribution of no mean importance. There are two spondees at the beginning of line five; there is one at the beginning of six; there is one at the beginning of nine; and the first foot of the last line may be read with equal success as a spondee or as an iamb. All of these spondees can be forced into the iambic pattern, but they will have to be forced, and the poem will suffer. It is only in a poem such as this one, in which the rhythm is strongly and obviously marked by a great and regular distinction between accented and unaccented syllables that the true spondee can occur; in a smoother and subtler type of structure, such as my next exam-

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ple, two syllables of nearly the same degree of accent will be absorbed into the iambic pattern and will not stand out as approximately equal to each other; furthermore, any attempt to read them as spondees will destroy the movement of the poem.

My next example is from Shakespeare. Before this sonnet was written, Sidney and other early experimenters had rendered the line smoother, more varied, and more subtle:

When to the Sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye unused to flow,
For precious friends, hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since-cancelled woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

The position of the cesura in this sonnet is less varied than in the poem by Googe; it falls after the second foot in eleven out of fourteen lines; but the cesura is much less noticeable, partly because it is not emphasized by heavy grammatical breaks, and partly because of other qualities of the rhythm. Aside from this difference in cesural value, the most considerable rhythmic difference between this poem and the poem by Googe resides in the fact that there are great differences in the degrees of accent to be found *among the syllables which count metrically as accented*. It will be remembered that I remarked earlier that the accented syllable can be recognized as such only with reference to the other syllable or syllables within the same foot, for no two syllables bear exactly the same degree of accent: it is this fact which gives the rhythm of the best English verse its extreme sensitivity. But rhythm, in poetry as in music, is controlled variation from an arithmetical norm; and the rhythm ceases to be rhythm, and becomes merely movement, whenever the norm itself is no longer discernible.

I will illustrate what I have been saying by two lines from the sonnet. The scansion of the first line gives us a trochee followed by four iambs. The third foot, however, which is composed of the second syllable of *Sessions* followed by the preposition *of* (the accented syllable), is very lightly accented. In the following foot, which is composed of *sweet,* followed by the first syllable of

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silent, sweet, the unaccented syllable, is more heavily stressed than the accented syllable of the preceding foot, so that we have in effect a series of four degrees of accent within two successive feet. Furthermore, if the reader should suffer from the delusion (a common one) that the second of these feet is really a spondee, let him read it the way he is forced to read the true spondees in the poem by Googe, and he will discover that spondaic rhythm is a very different matter from what he has here, and that the attempt to introduce it into this poem will be disastrous. The same thing occurs in the fourth and fifth feet of line nine:

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone.

It occurs in the first two feet of Bryant's line:

Where thy pale form was laid with many tears.

It occurs in the last two feet of Ben Jonson's line:

Drink to me only with thine eyes.

It is, in fact, one of the commonest phenomena in English verse, yet I have seen a good many distinguished scholars and eminent poets interpret it wrongly.

I shall now quote a well known song from John Dowland's *Second Book of Aires*:

Fine knacks for ladies, cheap, choice, brave and new!
Good pennyworths! but money cannot move.
I keep a fair but for the fair to view;
A beggar may be liberal of love.
Though all my wares be trash, the heart is true.

Great gifts are guiles and look for gifts again;
My trifles come as treasures from my mind.
It is a precious jewel to be plain;
Sometimes in shell the Orient's pearls we find.
Of others take a sheaf, of me a grain.

Within this pack, pins, points, laces, and gloves,
And divers toys, fitting a country fair.
But my heart lives where duty serves and loves,
Turtles and twins, court's brood, a heavenly pair.
Happy the heart that thinks of no removes.

There are sprung, or spondaic, feet in the first, second, sixth, seventh, eleventh, thirteenth, and fourteenth lines of this poem. These feet represent the same

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kind of variant which we found in Googe, and for the most part we have the same strongly marked difference between accented and unaccented syllables and similarly strong cesural pauses, even in lines in which no spondees occur. Yet whereas the rhythm of Googe is hard, fast, and didactic, the rhythm of this poem is slower, more complicated, and very songlike. The result is partly due to more spondaic variants than we found in Googe, and to spondaic variants in other positions than the initial ones; it is partly due to the introduction at certain points of the type of line which we found in Shakespeare, such as the following:

It is a precious jewel to be plain

a line in which the iambic fourth foot, composed of the second syllable of *jewel* and the proposition *to*, is extremely light and short and is followed by a final foot (*be plain*) in which the unaccented syllable is heavier than the accented syllable *to* before it; yet in this last foot the difference between *be* and *plain* is so marked that no one would be tempted to call the foot a spondee.

The author likewise does certain strange and ingenious things with his spondees. The first line, for example, goes as follows:

Fine knacks for ladies, cheap, choice, brave and new!

The first foot is spondaic, the second iambic; the third foot, consisting of the second syllable of *ladies* and of *cheap*, is likewise iambic, but the cesura, reinforced by the comma in mid-foot, throws the accent onto *cheap* with unusual force, and *cheap* is then followed by the spondaic foot consisting of two syllables which are almost exactly equal to it, and which are likewise set off by commas, so that we have the illusion of a foot consisting of three accented syllables, or an English molossus. The author does something similar but almost more adventurous in the eleventh line, where the heavily iambic foot *this pack* is followed by the heavy spondee *pins, points,* which in turn is followed by the heavily inverted foot, *laces,* with the result that we get four strong accents in sequence, though only one spondee. Technically, this is one of the most brilliant poems in the language. Dowland (or his unknown poet) learned what he could from Googe and improved upon it; and he complicated the method (without destroying it—a difficult feat) by rhythms acquired from the refiners of the intervening period.

I shall now show the use of different types of iambic pentameter rhythm employed in a regular pattern. To do this, I shall employ a song by Campion. The song rhymes in couplets. The metric pattern consists of two lines of what one might call the primitive type of line, with heavy stresses and heavy cesuras, but with no spondees: in these two lines the first and third feet are inverted, the rest iambic, and the cesura falls after the second foot. The third and fifth lines are evenly iambic and are less heavily stressed, and the cesuras in these lines

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occur in different positions and are so light as to be all but imperceptible. The fourth and sixth lines are of the same type of iambic movement as the last lines mentioned, but contain seven feet instead of five. There are two stanzas, and the pattern in the two is as nearly identical as the inescapable variations of language permit:

Follow your saint, follow with accents sweet!
Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet!
There, wrapt in cloud of sorrow, pity move,
And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love:
But if she scorns my never ceasing pain,
Then burst with sighing in her sight, and ne'er return again.

All that I sung still to her praise did tend;
Still she was first, still she my songs did end;
Yet she my love and music both doth fly,
The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy:
Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight!
It shall suffice that they were breathed and died for her delight.

I shall now quote a sonnet by Gerard Hopkins, which is basically iambic pentameter, but which employs every conceivable variant. I have marked and described the scansion of this sonnet in my essay on Hopkins,[3] and at this time I shall make only a few general remarks about the structure. The poem contains iambic feet, trochees, spondees, one molossus (a foot of three accented syllables), monosyllabic feet, trisyllabic feet of one accent each, and one or two feet which must be considered either as containing more than three syllables or else as containing syllables which are extrametrical or elided. The poem is successful as regards structure and rhythm, and it offers a rhythmic departure from the norm about as extreme as anyone is likely to achieve:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small

[3]THE HUDSON REVIEW. Vol. I No. 4 and Vol II No. 1 (Winter and Spring, 1949).

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Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

By the use of five short poems I have indicated a number of widely varying rhythms all of which are measured by iambic pentameter. So far as meter and rhythm are concerned all five are masterpieces; and in spite of any faults which may be found in them with regard to other matters, all five are brilliant poems and should be part of the literary experience of any man using the English language. Yet not one of these poems amounts to anything if its rhythm is not rendered with great precision; to read the poem so that its rhythm does not emerge in its totality and in every detail is to reduce the poem to lifeless fragments. You cannot buy expert readings of these poems on disks, as you can buy expert renderings of Bach and Mozart; nor can you go to a concert and hear them—every man is his own performer. It is important, therefore, that we read properly. But to read properly one must understand the principles both of English meter and of English rhythm, and not in a haphazard manner, but precisely; and one must understand the use of one's own voice; and after that one must practise.

I am at a disadvantage in dealing with a subject of this kind before an audience whom I cannot reach with my voice, for I cannot demonstrate, but am forced to try to describe. The nearest thing to a demonstration that I can offer is my reading of my own poems in the Library of Congress series. I do not consider myself a finished performer, nor, I think, are these readings the best of which I am capable. But they are all I can offer, and they will serve to indicate the method in a general way.

I have been told that this method of reading makes all poems sound alike, but this can be true only for those persons to whom all poems sound alike in any event, or for whom essential differences are meaningless. The virtue of the method, on the contrary, is that it gives each poem its precise identity, and no other method will do this. If this precise identity does not interest you, then you are not interested in poetry and you will in all likelihood never discover poetry. Some time ago, when I was defending this method of reading in public, a well-known scholar objected to my theories with a good deal of indignation, and he objected especially to my reading of the Dowland poem which I have quoted in these pages. He said that it was a street stong, or peddler's song, and should be rendered as such. I do not know exactly how Elizabethan street songs were rendered, and I do not believe that he knew; but any attempt so to render it would be, I am sure, unfortunate, even if one had the necessary information. The poem is not a street song; it is a poem on love and on the art of poetry and on a relationship between the two, and it is one of the most deeply serious and deeply moving short poems of the Elizabethan period—the peddler is purely metaphorical, and his part in the poem is both indicated and formalized by the metrical structure and it should remain formal and no more than indicated in the reading. If the poet refers by way of metaphor to a

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cow, the reader is not, I trust, expected to moo. I refer the reader back to my quotations from Valéry, especially the last sentence. Of the "meaning" of the poem he says: "You will introduce it at the end as the supreme nuance that will transfigure the poem without altering it." By "the end", he means the end of the process of studying the poem and arriving at the proper rendering.

Bad reading and bad (or no) training in metrical theory are largely to blame, I believe, for the insensitive literary judgments by many critics who in other matters are very brilliant, and they are to blame also for a fair amount of bad academic work in literature. At Stanford University, at this writing, we have over one hundred graduate students in English, and about half of these are candidates for the doctorate. We are in a position to select our graduate students very carefully. We accept none who have not made excellent records here or elsewhere, and although some come to us from the smaller institutions (and incidentally some of our best), the majority come from places like Yale, Harvard, Chicago, Columbia, Princeton, and the better state universities. These people have made excellent records in the past, and most of them make excellent records here; yet almost none can read a line of poetry aloud so that one can discern the structure, and very few can mark the scansion of a line from Shakespeare's sonnets—that is, until we have worked on them for a time. These people are in these respects the products of their teaching, and the teaching should be improved. Most of our best critics and many of our best-known poets are not much better. We have sunk into amateurism; and as a result we have in our time the meters of Eliot and of his imitators at the fifth remove, instead of meters comparable to those of the Elizabethans. And we have, worse still, a coherent (and fairly vocal) body of readers so ignorant that they prefer the incompetent to the expert.

If you answer that there are different kinds of poetry and hence we have different kinds of reading (this, of course, is the genteel answer which points to my lack of gentility), I am bound to reply that you are right: there are inferior kinds of poetry. By "inferior", I mean inferior in quality, not smaller in scope. The kind of reading which I defend is equally appropriate to a song by Campion or to an epic by Milton. Any poem which cannot endure the impersonal illumination of such a reading or which requires the assistance, whether expert or clumsy, of shouting, whispering, or other dramatic improvement, is to that extent bad poetry, though it may or may not be a good scenario for a vaudeville performance.

There will never be a first-rate poet or a first-rate critic who lacks a first-rate ear; and no one will ever acquire a first-rate ear without working for it and in the proper manner. Poetry, alas, like painting and music, is an art—it is not a form of happy self-indulgence; and to master an art or even understand it, one has to labor with all of one's mind and with at least a part of one's body.

[*An earlier draft of this essay was read as a public address at the Kenyon School of English, Kenyon College, in the summer of 1949.*]

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

The "New Philosophy of Language" in England

MODERN ENGLISH PHILOSOPHY has pursued a brilliant and unforeseen and rapidly changing course, but a course that matches its time. One can trace clearly in it the modern intellectuals' distrust of pious, fine-sounding, vague generalities, the scientists' admiration for minute and dispassionate analysis, a complexity and subtlety like that typical of all the contemporary arts, and in its later stages an emphasis on organic and functional enquiries as in ecology or modern anthropology or economics. One should remember this continuity with our whole contemporary culture, if only in justice to the subject; for philosophy is far too often accused nowadays of shirking its traditional responsibilities to man and society, and retiring into a linguistic hair-splitting isolation. As far as this has been true, it has been because philosophy has been typical of the whole intellectual climate of today—its detachment and subtlety and professionalism have been the popular intellectual qualities. But besides this, the period of detachment is probably coming to an end exactly now, and in a rather unexpected fashion. And because contemporary philosophy contains explosive elements, everyone needs to know how and why.

In spite of this often unnoticed harmony with certain dominant patterns in modern culture, the immediate and direct cause of a change in contemporary philosophy has been—as usually in all philosophy—some technical convulsion. An *impasse* presents itself in the continuing discussion that runs its way by quarterly stages through the learned journals, or gets fuller treatment when some professional philosopher publishes a book. The "philosophy of analysis" which dominated the scene by the early nineteen-thirties appeared at first as a solution to a quite recondite technical difficulty; and it illustrates how the most technical parts of philosophy, dealing with formal logic and mathematics, can periodically transform the whole subject. Bertrand Russell, in his researches into the philosophy of mathematics, had begun by assuming that certain mathematical terms and class-names represented genuinely existing realities that were the subject matter of mathematics. The view was traditional. But he found that it led him into a series of paradoxes. Meeting each difficulty as it came, he tried to evade these by an axiom that questions arising about members of a class (e.g. members of the class of real numbers, and so on) did not arise about the class itself. This led him to the idea of a class not a member of itself, and then to the idea of "the class of all classes that are not members of themselves". There, he made a major discovery: for this expression, harmless as it looks, and required as it was by his investigation, cannot possibly stand for any existing reality, since it is a concealed self-contradiction. A moment's thought (by a clear head, anyhow) shows that to say that this class too is not a member of itself, implies that it is, and to say that it is, implies that it is not.

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Russell therefore had a perfectly clear and indisputable proof that we could frame apparently quite legitimate expressions which generated philosophical cruxes by not being what they seemed. This had implications for philosophy as a whole. All expressions and all problems began to appear as if under a light polarized in a fresh direction; any expression, however innocuous it looked, might now prove on testing to be a trick. Philosophers hunted everywhere for expressions which, to put it loosely (and it usually was put loosely), were proper to a fact or state of affairs of one kind, but were actually being used of another kind. The danger in such expressions was that they could lead their users to draw false conclusions without knowing it. It was quickly recognized that trivial, even frivolous, examples were the best in illustrating this principle of "misleading language". They were much easier to understand and learn from, because in a sense they caricatured the more elusive and subtle fallacies hidden in serious philosophical issues. Philosophers had a chance to be entertaining, and they seized it with alacrity and with varying success. Russell pointed out, for example, that saying it is false to assert that "The King of France is bald" seems somehow to suggest that there is a King of France, although the point of the denial is exactly that there is not. Alternatively, we might come to think that one thing of a strange kind existed, when what really existed was many things of an ordinary kind. "Unpunctuality" is not a thing, but people are sometimes late; there are no objects called tree-tops, only collections of twigs. "The defeat of Germany" seems to refer to one event of a kind too vast to be observed in its entirety, but really it refers to a miscellany of quite straight-forward events. And what of the word "Germany" itself, or the name for any other country? These words too looked as if they stood for objects of a special kind, but the individual citizens and their houses and the ground they lived on were all that really existed. Plainly, the new philosophers got back to straightforwardly serious philosophy at this point; a logical apparatus of analysis had equipped them to expose every form of supra-individualism as based on subtle technical muddles. They had something to contribute to the fundamental issues of political and social thinking.[1]

But this comparatively modest programme for tidying and reclarifying language tended to become part of a much more drastic and extensive scheme of analysis. The quest for certainty, to use Dewey's phrase, is perennial among philosophers; and the usual view has been that while the statements which comprise pure mathematics and formal logic are certain enough, those which

[1]Russell's more limited suggestions were developed into a comprehensive philosophy by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922); and although he published almost nothing subsequently, Wittgenstein was the great central figure not only of the "philosophy of analysis" but also of all subsequent developments in England to the present time. Most of the examples in the above paragraph are from an article by G. Ryle (now Professor of Metaphysics in Oxford) entitled *Systematically Misleading Expressions; Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, (1931). This has been reprinted in a collection of modern philosophical essays entitled *Logic and Language* (Editor, G. N. Flew), published 1951.

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refer to what we experience, to existing real things, are liable to error in various ways. I say "there is a bright star", for example, and point; but may be wrong, because it is not a star but a trick of my eye, or a meteor or aeroplane light, or there may have been a star but by now it has disintegrated. Yet although one may misinterpret one's experience in various ways and in doing so fall into error, one is indubitably having experiences of a definite kind, and statements which refer simply to them and nothing further can, surely, it seems, be verified beyond risk of error. This appears to have immense importance: for it suggests that if one could show that other, more ambitious statements were equivalent to *collections* of these directly verifiable and therefore indubitable statements, one would have extracted the genuine and reliable part from the whole of one's alleged empirical knowledge. Whatever would be left over would be only vague, mystical, metaphysical—with no meaning at all, or at least no straightforward meaning.

Analysis was also given this more ambitious task: it was to penetrate down to the basic elements from which all complex assertions were built up, and in this role it seemed to offer a thorough-going reform of all empirical knowledge. The prospect was in many ways exciting. All the various kinds of assertions could be put on a proper, rigorous, scientific basis. Metaphysical jargon could be abandoned once for all, and so could all pretended references to pseudo-entities which could never conceivably be observed, and which it was therefore only a pious pretense to think meant anything to us at all. This programme, which pervaded the whole period of the twenties and early thirties, was expressed in brilliant and yet popular form by A. J. Ayer in *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936). The basic principles of this book were that whatever has meaning is verifiable, and that outside logic and mathematics, "verifiable" ultimately means verifiable in the immediate way in which the reader of this page can assure himself that at the very least he sees a white patch with black marks on it. Much of the programme seemed like a glorious release from a superstitious, constraining professionalism. Propositions about "The Absolute" and other metaphysical assertions could not be analysed into anything immediately verifiable at all, and simply disappeared. Perplexing philosopher's inventions, concepts like "Transcendental Self" and "Material Substance" were rejected too. Assertions were to mean simply what could be verified in a business-like way. As a result, a word like "I" was to be given meaning in terms of my perceptions, not of some mysterious entity, a Self, which led an occult life behind them; and an expression like "this table", given meaning in terms of all the real experiences which were had or might be had of the table, and not of a mysterious Substance somehow propping them up from behind.

This programme, which could be called "Logical Positivism" fairly honestly, was an early stage, a first rough approximation, in modern English Philosophy. We have moved so far away from its approach, methods, and conclusions, that anyone who now speaks of contemporary philosophy as "Logical Positivism"

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shows himself out of date by that fact alone. That early stage was beyond all question of great significance. It made a clean break with the past over the whole range of philosophy. But it was a bold extreme that might excite philosophers and stimulate them to further explorations, yet could not satisfy permanently. The prospect of eliminating metaphysics was widely attractive, but to most people the price was extravagant. The statements which comprise religion were to prove meaningless too; moral judgements were relegated to the status of cries or outbursts taking the form of a sentence but really only venting emotions. Many philosophers felt that these developments were untrue and perverse, though they might perhaps hint at something true and important. On the other hand, statements about the past had to be analysed as roundabout statements about the future, and statements about other people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings, had to be reinterpreted as if they referred only to the behaviour of the other people's bodies. These assertions seemed to be out-and-out muddles, although by contrast with the former two they might be academic and harmless. Here, then, was the first significant difficulty about "Logical Positivism": treat it on its own terms, like a scientific hypothesis, and it had false implications, and must therefore be false itself.

The second difficulty was simply that the bottom fell out of the whole theory. Statements about our immediate experience were fondly supposed to be completely certain: on examination they proved to be dubitable like all the rest. Take the example used above, seeing the black and white of the page. No doubt that in confining what one says to "immediate experience"—to the black and the white impressions, the "sense-data" as they were called—one does not lay oneself open to an error like saying one sees a page when really it is a hallucination: but by the late thirties philosophers began to see possibilities of error, though more subtle ones, even here. Is what one sees really white, for example, and not pale grey or pale cream? Suppose that on looking again more attentively we decide that it is pale cream: is "pale cream" the exactly proper term, would this rather be beige, or pale ochre, or stone-colour? We notice that we are forced to rely on our language-habits or our colour-charts, and both habit and memory are uncertain. These uncertainties may seem farcical to the layman—but after all, is it not rather a farce to think that this page may be a hallucination, which was the original doubt? After all the sacrifices and contortions of the analysis, there proves to be still no bedrock of absolutely certain statements from which to build up all other statements. And if not, the game is not worth the candle—it turns out to be a game with no prizes.

But the third difficulty was much more important, in that it suggested how philosophers could progress further. This difficulty arose because of something quite unexpected about many analyses, something they could not escape even when perfected, and even when they were of types of sentence which clearly warranted analysis. The crucial and surprising fact was that, even when a model in every respect, analysis produced something quite clearly different in

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meaning from the original, yet so little or so subtly different that one could seldom say what it left out or put in. It gave something closer than an implication, and yet more remote than an exact paraphrase. This new and unsuspected relation turned up at most of the really interesting transitions in our use of ordinary language; it was not simply a method, or a programme, like analysis itself, but a real, a major discovery.

This discovery diffused itself through English philosophy from perhaps 1930 on, and if we can talk about periods in modern philosophy, was what constituted period two. Its initiator was Wittgenstein at Cambridge, who was perhaps the only philosopher in history to have transformed his subject twice over in quite different ways. One reason why he preferred to disseminate his later views only by oral teaching is that, except at the price of crudification, there can be no standard model of this incomplete equivalence: one can only acquire a sense of it by a lengthy and detailed study of a multitude of particular cases. But two examples will be enough to prove its existence, if not to elucidate its varieties.

First, it comes to light if we analyse statements about ordinary material objects (like chairs or tables) into statements about our direct experiences of these objects. This was the analysis that received most attention in the thirties; most philosophers were inclined to agree that what mattered in such a statement was what it implied, if not about actual experiences, at least about possibilities of experience; and several different kinds of analysis were offered.[2] These usually took the form of saying that any statement about a material object, observed or unobserved, could be translated into a large collection of statements about the experiences which one *would* have, *if* this or that or the other condition of experience were fulfilled. Thus a statement like "there is a hen-egg on that table" was identified with a collection of hypothetical statements of the form "if I *did* such-and-such . . ., I should *see* such-and-such . . ." and so on for every possible contingency of seeing, touching, tasting and so forth. All these hypothetical statements taken together constitute the equivalent of the original. The theoretical complexities were of course fantastic, but this was unimportant—the *full* meaning might be beyond one, what mattered was the kind of thing it was.

The significant difficulty arose as follows. Suppose I do what is required by the "if-clause" of any given unit in the translation (for example, stretch out my finger) but then my senses deceive me (e.g. I feel something hairy, not egg-like). Then the original sentence might be true, but one part of what is supposed to be its equivalent in meaning would have turned out false, which is self-contradictory. Now suppose that the egg is in fact a duck-egg, not a hen-egg. Only a small number of the hypothetical sentences would be different in the two analyses; in principle at least, my senses might deceive me every

[2]See H. H. Price, *Perception* (1932), and *Hume's Theory of the External World* (1940); or A. J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (1940).

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time I tested one of these, and I might *seem* to verify the hen-egg hypothetical statements on and on indefinitely, although the duck-egg is there all the time. The original statement might be true, and some parts of its alleged equivalent false; or it be false, and all parts of its alleged equivalent seem to prove true. A moment's thought will show that this is not something that any refinement in the analysis would obviate. It is intrinsic to the idea of analysing.

The second example is perhaps more important, because it led more directly to positive discoveries about language. Consider "Jane is in love" and what might well be offered as correcting such an assertion, getting nearer the truth—"Jane is infatuated". To say that Jane is in love seems to say something about what she does and feels, and about what she would do and would feel in various imaginable circumstances. But once again the original and the proffered equivalent cannot really be equivalent, because they prove not to be false together or true together. Some people love and don't show their love; or they're unemotional but they love all the same. One after another of the members of the set of statements alleged to be equivalent might prove false, but in the given case we should still refuse to say "No, she's not in love, only infatuated". But conversely, they might one after another prove true, and yet something about the situation as a whole, or some details of a quite new kind, might make us persist in saying that Jane's was a case only of infatuation. Our whole use of words proves more extempore, and more dependent on intangibles, than we had thought.

This concept, emerging from many different examples, of language as ineradicably fluid, was brilliantly illustrated in a long series of articles by John Wisdom (Cambridge) published in the late thirties and early forties,[3] and generalized into a theory in articles by Dr. F. Waismann (Oxford). Waismann's term for this pervasive quality of language was "open texture". Put in a simple and generalized form, this view of language maintains that the meanings of most words and expressions in common use are not precisely and exhaustively fixed, and that it would be very inconvenient if they were. They are given, by their users, just that degree of determinate meaning which fits them to do what they are needed to do: and to suppose that this can be a complete and rigid meaning is almost always a mistake. It is a mistake, because experience is constantly rewarding us with minor surprises, and because what we need to get from language, as something that can be related to experience, changes too. A terminology is useful because it is fluid at the edges, no less than because its centre is clear and definite. But unruly philosophers—those of the older school anyhow—instead of understanding this two-sided character of ordinary language, and acquiescing in it, used it unconsciously to create artificial perplexities. They took a word, strained it into a quite new use, created a paradox by reminding one dramatically at that point of the old use, and claimed that they were obliged to postulate some queer and unobservable entity to explain

[3] *Other Minds*, eight articles published in *Mind*.

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it away.[4] Alternatively they strained a word to a new sense, showed that (in the new sense) it could not be used where one had been using it quite happily (in the old sense), and claimed a startling discovery of a negative kind.[5] If the senses of words of ordinary language would not stretch far enough, they were stretched to the limit, exchanged for technical terms, and the stretching process resumed. Philosophers with the new attitude, however, decry every kind of attempt to tamper with ordinary language either by adding specialist words, or by shifting the senses of ordinary words. And they can bring against metaphysics not the blunt technique of the Logical Positivists (a demand to reject what cannot be straightforwardly verified) but a subtler and far more penetrating technique. They can expose, by meticulous scrutiny of the arguments that led to these conclusions, the exact point at which an extended metaphor, or a plausible but dogmatic assertion that one phrase was the equivalent of another, or some other device, surreptitiously adjusted the sense of a key term, and made an apparent argument of no argument.[6]

At one point the last paragraph contained the vaguest phrase I could find: language was described as "something that can be related to experience". This vagueness was deliberate; it was induced by the second of the two great positive discoveries that modern philosophers made about language. While philosophers regarded themselves as studying "ultimate reality", or "knowledge", or "thought", they unconsciously tended to take one distinctive kind of language as the norm of language. This they called "statement", or "description", or "assertion". Language, they assumed, was used to "refer"; it was used "about" the facts; it *meant*. As their attention became concentrated on language for its own sake, this tendency weakened naturally; and it was further weakened by another discovery about analysis. Sometimes a tendentious analysis, such as we have been examining, could be blamed on "open texture" resulting from indeterminate meanings. Words like nouns, adjectives, verbs, that is, had an irrevocably fluid use. But it became clear that sometimes a quite different difference existed between what analysis began with, and what it ended with. It rough-handled its subject matter, one might say, in a different dimension. This dimension, I think, showed itself in moral philosophy as early as any-

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[4]For example, an argument to prove the existence of Material Substance: Consider a man in clothes. Are the clothes essential to his being a man? No. Strip them away. What is left?—a naked man. But is his particular height, colour, shape, or any other such quality essential to being a man? No, *Strip them away*. What is left? Nothing? That cannot be true if we have only been stripping away inessentials . . . no, something must be left, *Substance* must be left.

[5]This form of argument produces doctrines like "we have no *reason* to predict that the sun will rise tomorrow", "we don't *know* that Paris is the capital of France", etc. The italicized words have been "treated".

[6]Historically, this paragraph is somewhat simplified, in that veneration for ordinary language existed for other reasons before the contemporary phase (e.g. especially the work of G. E. Moore, and in a very different way, Sir David Ross); and Logical Positivists like Ayer sometimes supplemented dogma by dissections.

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where. Logical Positivism argued in the beginning that moral judgements were not statements at all, but only cries venting emotion. This, confused as it was, already admitted that words could sometimes take a sentence form and yet do something other than describe, even if involuntarily. But under outraged attacks on this view by the older-fashioned philosophers, and as various modifications of it were tried out, the important fact began to emerge that no form whatever of describing facts, venting emotions, or somehow doing both together, could hope to get at what one really does in saying, for example, "It is your duty to enlist", or "to deal on the black market is outrageous". They cannot hope to do so, because often one is anxious to make one's words do a definite job of another kind: in the first case to issue a demand, in the second, perhaps, to announce one's position publicly, to commit oneself, to display where one stands in the matter. Possible alternatives make this quite plain: for the first, "You *must* enlist", or simply "Enlist at once!"; for the second, words like "intolerable" or "insupportable" instead of "outrageous", or simply an action with no words at all, like publicly cutting a notorious black marketeer. A whole new line of thought presents itself. Language stands revealed as a practical tool—or maybe a whole bag of tools, and each tool a distinctive use.[7]

Since the war philosophers, especially at Oxford, have devoted themselves more and more to detailed explorations of this or that particular use of language. In one of the earliest of these surveys, J. L. Austin pointed out [8] that to say, for example, "I promise to return this" has a radically different function from "he promises to return this". The latter may describe an action, but the essence of the former is not describing but doing: it *is* the promise. And "I promise" is only one of a large class of similar expressions like "I surrender", "I give", "I order" and so on—all of which primarily perform actions. One test of these utterances is that the word "hereby" can always be added to them; another, that they are not denied, so much as *challenged*: the proper counter to "I order you to . . ." being not "You are mistaken . . ." but "You are not in a position to order me to . . . ". Austin added, what was more important, that assertions of the form "I *know* that . . ." are also not purely descriptive, but in part perform an action, by offering a guarantee, by staking the speaker's credit. In other words, the descriptive function of language, and some other function, can be fused. In a similar article [9] somewhat later, H. L. A. Hart suggested that utterances like "That is mine", or "he did it", are also not plain descriptions, but function like expressions in law which

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[7]This concept of the various "uses" of language, as well as that of "open texture", are discussed more fully in *Language and Intelligence* (1951), by the present writer.

[8]In "Other Minds", part of a Symposium in the *Aristotelian Society Proceedings, Supplementary Volume XX* (1946).

[9]"The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights", *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1948-9; reprinted in *Logic and Language*.

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claim, or ascribe, rights or responsibilities. Another suggestion is that expressions like "that statement is true" do not describe some queer relation between statements and facts, but merely offer to confirm a statement already made by someone else.[10]

These are not simply explorations of linguistic oddities having some intrinsic interest. Their importance is rather that they throw a quite new *kind* of light on standard philosophical problems—in the four cases mentioned above, on the problems of "knowledge", "property", "voluntary action", and "truth". Peculiarities about the use of the word "know", for example, have intrigued philosophers in the past. They have taken account of such rubrics as "if I *know* I can't be wrong", and this has led them to suppose that when (if at all) "know" is justly used, it is justified by one, or other, or both, of two things. These are, first, a mental state of conviction in the same ascending scale as suspecting, believing, believing confidently, being convinced—yet higher than any of these; or second, a "relation to an object" in the same ascending scale as (for example) glimpsing something, seeing it, seeing it quite clearly—but again higher still. They thus believed that philosophy was discovering hitherto undiscovered realities, whether psychological states or "cognitive relations". The fuller and subtler contemporary analysis reveals that this is a mistake. "I know" is not higher in the same scale as "I am sure"; it relies on the same convictions, but it performs something which "I am sure" does not attempt. The shift, as it were to a new dimension, shows in persistent differences through a range of idioms. We say "*Why* do you believe?", but "*How* do you know?"; with bad evidence "You ought not to *be* sure", but "You ought not to *say* you know"; we can say simply "*For my part* I am sure", and thereby indicate that we leave others to determine for themselves, but to say "I know" proffers our authority and calls for its acceptance. Recognizing that a difference between expressions may be a difference between descriptive and non-descriptive functions, not between the facts to be described, philosophers can cease populating the world with queer pseudo-entities that nobody but they can detect.

The logical conclusion of these two basic lines of thought—the line of a multitude of uses for language, and that of an "open texture" in language—could be put very roughly in the form of a slogan: *every utterance has its own mission, every statement has its own logic.*[11] So far the present article has chiefly been summarizing the developments in logical and linguistic analysis which have led up to this view. But in doing so they have led up, surely, to something that hides a big surprise for the out-and-out opponents of old-fashioned philosophy. On the technical side this is not so: indeed, one of

[10] P. F. Strawson, in *Analysis* for June 1949.

[11] "Every statement has its own logic" was a popular slogan a little while ago. Philosophers are now busy arguing how and whether it is right to speak of a "logic" of utterances other than statements. See for example, R. M. Hare, "Imperative Sentences", *Mind* (1949), and a reply to this by A. F. Peters in the same volume.

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the latest philosophical books to appear from Oxford, Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1950) is the most comprehensive and perhaps too the most brilliant attempt so far, to show that elaborate philosophical theories about intelligence, emotions, self-knowledge, the "will" and so on, were really ineffective confusions. But while ordinary people have never been very much interested in philosophers' specialist proofs and technicalities, they have always been interested in simple popularized forms of their conclusions—for philosophy, that is, in so far as it is "about life". Now the specialists have discovered systematically how verbal utterances perform all sorts of unexpected functions in all sorts of indirect ways; and the question cannot but arise, whether the conclusions of metaphysicians, however precariously established on the technical side, do not exercise a justifiable and useful function in one of these indirect ways too. I believe, with some hesitation, that sometimes, and then perhaps only in small part, they do. Statements like "man is a spirit", "nothing is certain", "life is a dream", and so forth, are the plain man's versions of metaphysical doctrines; and their interest for the plain man seems to be that in a queer, half-understood, diagrammatic way they hint at something *in his experience, or life,* which previously he was unconscious of, but which they cause him to detect, although he would be much at a loss to prove them from his experience. And the same would be true of the contraries of these statements—which some readers may find a more congenial point. The modern philosopher of language need see nothing surprising in this, for he has learnt that the means whereby language reaches its goal are often devious and often misunderstood. But he will conclude from it that, in the past, metaphysicians have sometimes furbished up bad arguments, but done so to support significant and perhaps valuable assertions. And this line of thought also suggests that the philosophy of language may ultimately produce, or at least permit, a metaphysics of its own. Doubtless it will be very different from past metaphysics—that, fairly clearly, has gone for good; and perhaps it will contain little in the way of abstract and formal proof, and approach much more nearly in form to imaginative literature. But for all this, it will consist of that kind of statement which seems somehow to illuminate experience, but cannot be rigorously proved from experience; and therefore it will be metaphysics all the same.

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RACHEL FRANK

Art Chronicle

AFTER GIACOMMETTI'S *The Forest* (Pierre Matisse) even a Maillol, with all its formal reticence, seems like petrified flesh. These figures in miniature scale—grouped like chessmen—have none of the finesse of carving which marks the kings and queens of the game. Closer in feeling to the leaden toy soldier, *The Forest* may move the observer suddenly from benign amusement to—as he draws somewhat closer—a gravity poignant without flourish, twist or counter-thrust. One must not draw too close, however: Giacommetti sees the human figure from a distance where he is all one as a human and spatial entity. Traditional sculpture divides matter; but Giacommetti's figures are analogies of pure existence and hence, like the silhouetted figures of such painters as Whistler, Seurat, and Vuillard, are stripped of the accident of feature. Both destination and flesh-fulfillment (swelling rhythms) have been forfeited for a stasis in which the human being succumbs to what he does not understand by standing over, as it were, like a tree. This group of trees has neither root nor bough. The wasted and mutilated faces are as a used wick to a candle on which the heavy tallow has been cooling for ages. All that each "tree" can be sure of is that his fellow belongs to the same grove.[1]

Giacommetti's groups are made up of separate individuals any one of whom might be taken away, as in death. But Jacques Lipschitz (Buchholz) welds individuals together in a pattern of light and shade, solid and void, so inter-dependent that not only is each individual inseparable from the other; he is meaningless except in terms of the group which forms the sculptural universe of a work. In this respect Lipschitz is in the grand tradition of sculpture as compared with Giacommetti, who—apart from his resemblance to Lehmbruck of the long, huge, lonely figures—gains his distinction, in part, by a brilliant act of humility. For the "toy" man is a technical solution to an attitude. It is as though Giacommetti had decided to give up the big pose and see whether a little dignity could still be salvaged. This is not to imply that an artist like Lipschitz is overstated. Having partly discarded representation in his cubist period, he does not (now that stiff, mechanized rhythms have given way to the sometimes gnarled and bulbous, sometimes wavelike forms of a more natural inspiration) change his former principle of contorting actual shapes to fit his expressive needs. But the angles have mostly become curves, and the abrupt planear divisions of cubism have been left behind for the vigorous continuity of swirling movement. Compared to the buoyant fluency

[1]Cf. Jean Paul Sartre's crisp, incisive essay on Giacommetti ("La Recherche de l'Absolu", *Les Temps Modernes*, January 1948) where he quotes from Giacommetti's statements on his work.

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of Nikolaus Koni (Milch), Lipschitz is uneasy, and earns his balance every step of the way. The scars and scabs of inner travail are left proudly on the work. (Cf. *The Prayer*, bronze, 1943). The cubist habit of conceiving the object from all sides, as in African sculpture, saves his present work from the facility rounded surfaces are apt to fall into if they are not braced by various resistances. In *Agar*, for example, whose main pattern may be reduced to a circle within an oval, the voluptuous swirls of bronze forming the infant Ishmael are impelled against the breast of the mythical giantess as the forces of the sea push waves against rock. In this kind of opposition there is no agony, only a resolution acquired through the attempt of one force to fulfill the thrust of its need against the slow rhythms of a patient force needing equally to withstand. In *Mother and Child* (bronze, 1949) cubistic multiplicity of vantage has resulted in heavily accented dominant and subordinated motifs trying to awaken from the sleep of matter. This piece—as often happens in cubist forms—makes sense from three points of view: the back and each side. The front view does not seem to come together at all; it does in the case of most African sculpture.

Giacommetti's work steps back; Lipschitz's work tends to step forward. Giacommetti's language is as simple as his concept is attenuated. This raises the problem of "projection" in art, or the degree of visual emphasis required for a work to be perceived in full. A good place in which to test projection was the Artist's Equity Show put on by the Whitney Museum. This show, incidentally, tried to balance the relation of new artists to well-known ones by showing the paintings and sculpture of both with signatures hidden. Not only was this a fine gesture of democracy on the part of established artists; it focused attention on the painting rather than the artist, and in this way challenged the perceiver to experience a work uniquely. The show was so packed with canvases that it would take considerable time to sort them out and give them their due. Number 142, an oil in ochres and earthy reds, impressively sketched the melancholy duress of a family group, similar in feeling to a poignant tempera of two beggars. Number 250 was a sharp, clean casein (I believe) of a landscape and cabin. There were others no doubt meriting equal attention. The show placed no stress on any one movement; abstractions mingled on an equal footing with various shades of representationalism. Now many of the paintings in this show had enormous physical projection. Colors leaped out of their canvases, boomed across the room and tore out the eye-balls. Often (though not necessarily) these works were poor in emotional resonance—a quality requiring an unforced reserve of feeling settling itself into the observer's awareness like the slow changes of climate or the whole life-span from infancy to death. This is neither to denounce the experimenters nor to ask that artists always walk about on tip-toe in their work, but only to point out that in art, as in science, the simplest solution to the most complex problem often turns out to be the best, and that busyness

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in every part of a canvas is no guarantee of vitality. In the *Crucifixion* series of Rico de la Brun, for example, yellow is brown in bloom; bright is the ecstasy of the somber, and is reserved till it may come into play as a culmination.

Another question arises in the course of comparing the impromptu show of abstractions at 60 East 9th Street with the little retrospective corner on American pioneers associated with "21" at the Museum of Modern Art, and the latest work of Europeans and Americans at the Matisse. Before we formulate this question, let us see whether it does, in fact, arise out of the actual works seen. Miro's canvas at the Matisse is a good place to begin because it recalls the Dadaist movement which, in effect, dethroned the nineteenth-century father, with his solemn beard, his parcel of religion, his humorless belief in his own infallibility. Such a father sits before us on the canvas stiff as a tintype but, interestingly, not caricatured, rather fulfilled as a literal portrait for all he is worth in solidity. To this extent Miro respects his subject. But then he scrawls over this carefully-painted work with his usual stenographic spontaneity, wit, casualness, and racily fugitive linear grace. Style challenges content. Now in the show of abstractions at 60 East 9th Street, content is absent and style asserts itself as the predominant factor; phrased differently, content is "the image of the whole painting" (Willem de Kooning's words) but without the intrusion of objects such as we know them in familiar experience. From this point of view the object is cliché, embellishment, or escape from the limitations of the medium, in the same way as program music would seem to be irrelevant to essential musical form. Is this movement indeed a progression or a cul-de-sac? The chances may very well be that our experience of visual form—even when transformed in memory or imagination—originates naturally in the concrete material of the retina; whereas music is naturally abstract and rarely traceable—even remotely—to specific noises in our surroundings. As for "the image of the whole painting", is it not, after all, that inner cohesion among parts which distinguishes a good work, no matter what its classification? Apart from the convictions of each artist, which rest on his own experience, the question is probably less crucial than the one which seeks to determine how the movement has affected the work of artists whose experience of visual form is inseparable from actual objects or forms seen in an emotional light. And it cannot be denied that emphasis on the formal potentialities of the medium has kept serious artists with a flair for imitating objects literally from submitting to the raw and random formations into which things tend to fall. Ben Shahn's reportorial gift (Downtown) would be less interesting—granted the human empathy and bite, and natural grace of line which hum through his drawings—without the lean, oblique arrangements which rest on non-objectivist experiments as well as on centuries of oriental achievement. The solemn wit of *Tennis Umbrella* and the fiendish verve of *Bicycle Act* attest to his versatility of mood apart from the crucial realm of

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human compassion or outrage. Still, it must be admitted that his bold drawing of a farmer, excellent as a drawing, reminds one somehow of a transplanted factory worker.

Compared to the work of Ben Shahn, Willem de Kooning's drawings in black and white (Egan) are labyrinths of linear vitality. They give the same air of inexhaustibility as capillaries in marble. Here the principle of composition is not a limited organism like the human body. In this respect de Kooning relates to Jackson Pollock, for whom the frame is an arbitrary enclosure of the arabesque, except that the continuity of flat design which looks as though it is repeating itself, is actually always new in detail. Unlike Pollock, however, de Kooning still reminds one of Kandinsky and Rouault in some of his work, for he has not given up either the figure or the attempt to penetrate depth sharply.

Lionel Feininger (Buchholz) is an artist who has achieved a world of stability suave in execution, iridescent in color, solid in dimension and yet slipping away over vast heights. A playful staccato of line deepens space by suggesting perspective. Synchronist experiments in the prism-like effects of light, like those of Delaunay, lie behind Feininger's development and cannot be ignored in their effect on this excellent artist's work.

Among the Daumier oils at the Wildenstein both the dark recess of *The Writer* and the light recess of *Drama* give that sense of secrecy now held back, now revealed, whereby chiaroscuro dramatizes the unfathomed element in human experience. His drawing of a family group at the window is a little classic of serenity punctuated by uncannily observed accuracy of expression. (The mixture of boredom, rivalry and pride with which the father looks down at the feeding infant is unsurpassed for masterly understatement.) In Daumier's work the human figure is characteristically charged with a cloaked vitality reminiscent of the two background figures in Goya's *Las Majas*. By the standards of a David, Daumier's paintings look sketchy; but the history of art is filled with the refiners of craft. Less common are those who refined the life within, and developed a craft peculiar to their vision. In this respect, it may prove enlightening to compare two canvases of Delacroix (Wildenstein). In *Diana Surprised by Acteon* all the figures except the one in the left hand corner are more posed than poised, as if the painter had no time to breathe between glances at his models and the canvas. The figure in the corner, on the other hand, has the resilience of immediate imaginative conception. This same resilience marks Delacroix' most successful canvases—such as *Les Convulsionnaires de Tanger*, where the figures retain the hot mobility with which they were conceived, so that each one is separate yet swept into the others by an impulse so extreme as to demand such images as a man down on his haunches like a tiger in the face of assault. Baudelaire wrote of Delacroix that he may have been weak in detail as compared to a Dürer, but that his strength was integral, epic; and this was surely enough to ask of him.

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FRANCIS MASON, JR.

Ballet Chronicle

DURING THE 1950-51 SEASON, New York saw almost 30 new ballets, presented by five different companies. Three came from Europe—the Sadler's Wells, the Marquis de Cuevas' Grand Ballet and Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris; two were American—the New York City Ballet and Ballet Theatre (the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, America's other company, chose not to risk a New York engagement). None of the new ballets presented by the Sadler's Wells and the Grand Ballet is likely to be seen here again.[1] Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris is not, properly speaking, a ballet company but a vaudeville troupe exploiting the performances of special theatrical personalities. Petit's new long work for his group, *La Croqueuse de Diamants* (Damase) reinforces the notion that he is neither interested in dancing nor able to create it.[2]

Ballet Theatre, too, is no longer a dance organization with a unified purpose; since its return from Europe last winter, it has become, more than anything else, a booking agency for outside talent. During its three-week engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House last spring, three of the company's principal dancers were guest artists (Jean Babilée, Nathalie Philippart and Colette Marchand) and three of its new ballets were imported from France for these artists. Only one of Ballet Theatre's eight new works originated within the company itself (an inconsequential, "Tropical," pas de deux by Enrique Martinez). All eight ballets, in one way or another, were failures.

To deal with these ballets as briefly as they deserve: *Concerto* (Dollar) and *Ensayo Sinfonico* (Alicia Alonso) were dance ballets with music ill-chosen for dancing (Chopin's *2nd Piano Concerto* and Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, respectively). Neither possessed movement sequential enough to take in the eye, which was deflected instead to unattractive decor. Both *The Thief Who Loved a Ghost* (Ross-Weber) and *Circo de Espana* (Maracci-Albeniz, et al) were theatrical jokes rather than ballets—the first an overlong joke, the second a series of pranks, presumably designed for private parties, that never should have seen the stage. *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit* (Petit-Francaix), a 40-minute effort at narrative choreography, collapsed in both story and dance within 10 minutes: the character of the cat who turned into a beautiful girl all for the love of a minstrel and back into a cat again for

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[1]For comment on the repertories of these two companies, see *Ballet Chronicle* in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Winter 1951.

[2]Petit labors under the illusion that dancing, which is naturally displayed by the bodies of attractive young people, must have sex imposed upon it. This is not embarrassing, as some feel, but comic. Petit's ballets are not pornographic; they are auto-erotic.

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a scampering, roof-top finale failed to provide Colette Marchand with the vehicle she deserves (the fact that Margot Fonteyn, for whom Petit put this work together, deserved it even less makes this choreographer's impoverishment still more shocking). *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* (Petit-Cocteau-Bach), an apache dance to the *Passacaglia in C Minor,* invoked adolescent notions of love-death that cause the hero to hang himself. Almost every gesture in this ballet is repeated three times; the audience applauds the climactic suicide. *L'Amour et Son Amour* (Babilée-Franck) was an improvised piece of impressionism on the story of Cupid's love for Psyche that never rose above the inertia of its score (Franck's *Psyche Suite*).

But if the Ballet Theatre season had no interest where its ballets were concerned, it was of considerable interest in respect to its dancers. Igor Youskevitch has become the company's principal reason for existing. However miscast (*Helen of Troy*), however much his ability is badly used (*Concerto, Tropical Pas de Deux*), Youskevitch maintains a gracious, good-humored stage presence and dances perfectly what he has learned: no choreographer can make a fool of him. It is probable that Youskevitch is the only *danseur noble* of our time. Alone among male dancers he understands what it is to be formal, understands that although classical dancing can be a beautiful and exciting and serious thing, it is not the business of the dancer to convince us of this by displaying a flamboyant personality but rather to prove it by perfectly executed dancing. Youskevitch knows that intimacy with an audience is not to be established by intimacy on the stage—nor by isolation, either. To watch Youskevitch dance a classical pas de deux with a great ballerina is to see that this form of dance is not the circus number it so often becomes, but a lyrical romance: the *danseur noble* appreciates the ballerina more than the audience and allows it to see her at her best.

Unfortunately, Ballet Theatre now has no great ballerina. Alicia Alonso is still a fine dancer, but the weight she has taken on has coarsened the lines of her beautiful face and impeded her swiftness (there were moments in some ballets where it was hard for Alonso to maintain in pirouettes an even approximate perpendicular). Perhaps to accommodate these faults, Alonso also affects a studied listlessness; she seemed at every opportunity to be just waking from a dream. This imitation of the sylph-like Markova is surely uncalled for if Alonso is to become a great ballerina in her own right. I suspect that Ballet Theatre lacks a director with sufficient authority to tell her such things. Nor is there anyone to tell Mary Ellen Moylan that it is foolish for her to imitate Alicia Alonso. Formerly of the Ballet Russe, Moylan has for some curious reason changed her style of dancing with Ballet Theatre. What used to be brilliant and dynamic in her movement is now softened and blurred. It is natural, no doubt, for young artists to imitate, but it does not seem sensible even from a commercial point of view, that a ballet company should permit this to work to the detriment of individual style.

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Jean Babilée is a short, long-haired dancer with a great deal of strength, a dramatic jack-in-the-box. He moves slowly, with reluctance, then leaps quickly, like a tightly coiled spring suddenly released, describing not long horizontal arcs but quick, high trajectories. His first success, *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* (1946), allows him to perform in this spectacular fashion as he alternately grovels about on the floor; indeed, it is the only thing to watch in this ballet. It is not enough. *Prince Igor* and *Scheherezade* ought to be revived for Babilée, since no one in the space of five years has been able to create a work that utilizes simultaneously his dramatic and acrobatic gifts. (He is not a classical dancer, as the European myth would have it; he danced the "Bluebird" pas de deux as if he thought it was nonsense, and as he danced it, it was.) It is unfortunate that Babilée and Nathalie Philippart, both of whom might serve dramatic ballet so well, continue to be effective only in their first success and will not submit their talent to a discipline other than their own.

During the winter, I was able to see the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo for several performances in Philadelphia. The company is dancing admirably; one feels, as one does not with Ballet Theatre, that all the dancers have been told one thing by one person and that they have all learned something. The dancers have little to dance, however; the Ballet Russe management continues to capitalize on the bromide that all ballet is Russian ballet. A new work, *Prima Ballerina* (Chamié) was amusing for half of its 30 minutes and should be cut accordingly.

The New York City Ballet danced for ten weeks at the City Center in New York during 1950-51 and presented ten ballets new to the company. Eight of the new works have been retained. *The Cage* (Robbins-Stravinsky) is the most distinguished new dramatic ballet. It is derived from the final section of Balanchine's *Orpheus*, in which the lust-seeking Bacchantes tear the hero to pieces because he abjures their notion of love. Here, however, this content is inverted. The hideous women of *The Cage* abjure lust and seek the male of the species only for procreation. The possibility of love is entertained by a Novice of the tribe (Nora Kaye), who for a few brief moments forgets the instinct of the cult. She remembers, strangles her lover between her knees, and watches joyfully as his body is rolled across the ground under the feet of her companions, who now accept her as their equal.

Jerome Robbins is extraordinary among American-born choreographers. Devising dramatic movement to a sequence of music is no problem to him (nor is devising movement to silence, as in the most impressive parts of his *Age of Anxiety*). But Robbins must have a non-dramatic, non-dance idea to compel him to devise this movement. His ballets thus become dance demonstrations of ideas to be found in the program notes. The virtue of his new ballet is that the movement he has created dramatizes the idea at hand beyond all question. Its fault is that its drama does not extend beyond the

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non-dramatic vacuum of its program note; it is a mere curiosity. Having accomplished for the first time immediately intelligible stage action throughout a whole ballet, Robbins would do well to abandon program notes. *The Cage* also suggests that it would be well for him to design a story ballet that has its own ideas, a character ballet.

Le Baiser de la Fée (Balanchine-Stravinsky, 1937) is a great dramatic ballet based on a fairy story. Just as its score is Stravinsky's tribute to the genius of Tchaikovsky, its choreographic arrangement is Balanchine's tribute to Hans Christian Andersen and a theatrical display of Andersen's genius at making the abstract real. Andersen's story tells of a child who is rescued by a mysterious Ice Maiden only to be reclaimed by her 20 years later on the eve of his marriage. Ballet would seem to be the ideal locus for such a story, and so it would be if we were not too accustomed nowadays to the ballet of character, the ballet of the realistic or social situation. "And so they lived happily ever after", the ending so many fairy stories have, is realistically nonsense, perhaps, but the children who read fairy stories don't care who "they" are; what is real to them is happiness. And so it is with *Le Baiser de la Fée*. A child would understand it perfectly. First of all, there are no characters, but great conflicting forces—forces of destiny, forces of human happiness. As these forces fight to possess the hero, the ballet takes on the ruthlessness and beauty of the kind of dream that Andersen's fairy stories remind us of—the dream that may end happily or unhappily but that instructs nevertheless. Planned by Stravinsky as an allegory—"the Muse having similarly branded Tchaikovsky with her fatal kiss"—the ballet tells not only the story of the artist's conflict with human happiness but the more general story of what we all might understand about ourselves if we believed in fairy stories. Balanchine's portrayal of the equation between the terrible and the beautiful, as the Bridegroom recognizes his fate, is one of the most moving scenes in all ballet.

In *La Valse* (Ravel), Balanchine has dramatized two pieces of music (*Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* and *La Valse*) with dancing that fulfills Ravel's basic idea for the latter score: "impressions of the mad whirl of some fantastic and fateful carrousel". The movement is at first formal and fashionable with the full waltz strains, then sweetly romantic. As the romance dissolves into the formality of the ballroom it becomes delirious; it is then corrupted, and the waltz step disintegrates as Ravel's music shatters the theme into hundreds of tinkling pieces.

Balanchine's *Capriccio Brillant* (Mendelssohn), a formal showpiece for a ballerina and her partner and a corps de ballet of four girls, failed because its setting of black backdrop and piano soloist on stage worked for intimacy rather than elegance. The ballet should be re-designed and restored. Balanchine's *Mazurka* (Glinka), a novelty in which the choreographer danced, has been dropped from the repertory. Antony Tudor's portrayal of *Lady of the Camellias* (Verdi)—in a perpetual state of innocence—unintelligibly remains.

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Card Game, Balanchine's light masterpiece to the Stravinsky score, has been happily revived. Two short dance works: *Sylvia: pas de deux* (Delibes) and *Pas de Trois* (Minkus), both by Balanchine, provide the principal dancers of the New York City Ballet with splendid opportunities to display their genius at classical dancing. An important addition to the repertory has been a new American ballet by Ruthanna Boris, *Cakewalk* (Gottschalk-Kay) which successfully adapts minstrel show turns to a dance performance of original good humor.

To dance these new works the New York City Ballet has the best company in the world (until the Soviet ballet becomes a part of the world, we must continue to ignore it). Everyone enjoys dancing in it. It would seem obvious that dancers should enjoy dancing; but it often happens that from ballet to ballet, from performance to performance, dancers cannot criticize themselves and must rely on the word of someone else that they danced well: then they enjoy it, when it is too late. These dancers know when they are dancing well while they are performing on stage, and their pleasure projects to the audience, which appreciates the ballet as the dancers appreciate each of its many parts. From its most difficult of contemporary repertories, the New York City Ballet Company has learned that small groups of dancers and secondary soloists are part of a choreographic design that would fall apart through competition: everyone must dance together—in unison or in contrast as the case may be—for the single, perfect result. The faults of the corps de ballet—lines that are persistently zig-zag when they should be straight, imprecise execution in slower movements—can be corrected. They should be corrected under stringent discipline, without delay, for already the company possesses excellences that no amount of mere correction could ever produce.

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Reviews

HARVEY SWADOS

Fiction of Three Countries[1]

COLLECTIONS OF SHORT STORIES are notoriously dangerous things. It is very difficult to maintain a novelistic level of narrative tension and a unified style throughout a group of discrete stories, but the reader can hope that writers with a consistent attitude will be able to sustain their original vision in shorter works with a minimum of faltering. This expectation has been happily fulfilled in the collections of Frank O'Connor and James Stern, two Irish writers with little in common save birthplace and devotion to the art of the short story.

O'Connor is committed to the Ireland that we know from the playwrights of the Abbey Theater and the poets of the Irish renaissance: his world is one of drunkards, priests, children, and peasants, linked by the bonds of love, nationalism, humor, and magic. His craft is that of the folk artist, and his guilelessness—almost never marred by the intrusion of conscious artifice in the manner of American "folk" artists, working without a body of tradition—is both endearing and moving.

Stern on the other hand is a cosmopolitan, not merely in his travels, which have carried him from England to the Continent to Africa to the United States, and have provided him with an immense variety of usable material, but also in his literary expression, which is at the farthest pole from the deceptively casual manner of O'Connor. Stern's true concern is with those subtle gradients that measure the distances between happiness and sorrow, joy and grief, faithfulness and betrayal. When he does not fully succeed (as in "Solitaire", which deals with the meeting of two former lovers, or in "The Face Behind the Bar", describing the meeting in New York of two Irishmen twenty-five years after a chance encounter during Easter Week) it is only because the stories are too slight to bear the weight of his sophistication; but when the balance between craft and sensibility is just, as it is in practically every other story in *The Man Who Was Loved*, then we are privileged to experience some of the most sensitive story-telling of our time. As is fitting for an artist profoundly conscious of the essential mystery of human intercourse, James Stern never tells us quite enough, so that we are compelled not only to reread, but also to discover in our own experience individual meanings for the clues which are presented with such finesse in this brilliant volume.

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[1]TRAVELLER'S SAMPLES, by *Frank O'Connor*. Knopf. $2.75. THE MAN WHO WAS LOVED, by *James Stern*. Harcourt, Brace. $3.00. HANGSAMAN, by *Shirley Jackson*. Farrar, Straus, & Young. $3.00. THE TROUBLED AIR, by *Irwin Shaw*. Random House. $3.75. THE TWILIGHT OF THE ELEPHANT, by *Elio Vittorini*. New Directions. $1.50. THE WATCH, by *Carlo Levi*. Farrar, Straus & Young. $3.75.

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This is not to say that Frank O'Connor's *Traveller's Samples* suffer by contrast in their simplicity and quasi-conversational idiom, although these qualities are not ordinarily helpful in translating the more significant elements of human experience. It is O'Connor's special gift that he can go beyond a delightful joshing of the priesthood or of the peculiarities of the Irish attitude towards love and marriage; a story like "Old-Age Pensioners" is as poignant a depiction of the pathos of the aged as one is likely to find, while "The Thief", a Christmas tale, achieves the same kind of insight into the mind of a child confronted with ugly adult reality that James Stern conveys in "Our Father".

Both of the American novelists under present consideration also first commanded attention with their short story collections. Shirley Jackson's *Hangsaman* examines several crucial months in the life of Natalie Waite, an intense adolescent who is sent off to a nearby girls' college by her successful writer-father. This pampered literary monster, who is neither quite a genuine figure nor quite a genuine caricature, has trained his daughter to ignore her mother and her younger brother, to "develop" her own writing potentialities, and to measure her college instructors against his overweening personality. But at college Natalie finds that because she cannot slip into an appropriate groove, she is taken up by a homosexual fellow-student who tries to involve her in an affair. At the close she has rebuffed her friend and presumably emerged from adolescence to maturity.

There is a decided shift in tone between the early scenes at the comfortable home of the Waites and the later episodes at the girls' school. The description of Arnold Waite and his brood in their upper-middle class country home is distressingly reminiscent of the vignettes of Connecticut life with which the readers of the *New Yorker* are often regaled: the New Yorkerish attitude, tart and yet at bottom uncritical, and according to which the milieu must be described with wry amusement but without admitting that any other kind of existence is either desirable or practical, seems to have triumphed over Miss Jackson's individual intelligence. The result is that Natalie's adolescent gropings in the opening section can legitimately be considered as on a par with the comic posturing of her hyperintellectual father. Furthermore, when Natalie arrives at the girls' school (which is neatly ticked off in what is probably the most effective writing of the book) it is explained that Natalie's problems are really serious and must be sympathetically observed, and there comes a darkening of the prose texture (in the manner of Miss Jackson's expert horror stories) which is apparently intended to be allegorical but succeeds only in being heavily portentous. Possibly this unhappy development could have been avoided if Miss Jackson had been somewhat more cautious about abdicating her very obvious talents in favor of a standardized and easy attitude towards this segment of American society.

Irwin Shaw has made the transition from the short story to the novel with no perceptible difficulty. Indeed there seems to be no difficulty anywhere in

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his work, which is probably as definitive as any comment that could be made about Shaw. *The Troubled Air* considers the question of Communism and our civil liberties, as seen through the eyes of Clement Archer, academician turned radio writer and producer. Archer's program is accused of being infested with Communists; he gains several weeks' grace from the impatient sponsor in order to discover for himself which of his actors and musicians are Communists and determine what should be done. It is this tense period—together with flashbacks and side-glances at subsidiary characters—that bounds Clement Archer's experience.

Archer discovers a number of things that he might have learned earlier but that are extremely helpful in building tension and in moving the novel along: the composer was a Communist as a youngster in Europe and faces imminent deportation, the Negro comedian is not a Communist but is simply pathologically anti-white, the leading lady is a sexually frenzied Communist who becomes a voluble patriot overnight, the leading man—Archer's former student and closest friend for fifteen years—is the real leader of the Communist fraction. The fact that we are expected to believe that two men could be intimate friends over a period of years without one knowing that the other is a Communist is indicative of Shaw's disingenuousness. This is not a mere flaw in the plot, to be explained away in casual asides: it is a part of the author's belief that Communists are a peculiar kind of fanatic, not reminders of our depression past or of the faded faiths of the Thirties, as we might have thought, but totally unrelated to the facts of American life with which Shaw is as familiar as any of us. And so the reader is enabled to share with Clement Archer a kind of innocent wonder at all the goings-on, as well as a final grim resolve that both Communists and reactionaries must be fought.

There is something in this book for every member of the family, as they used to say of the movies; and it is small wonder that Irwin Shaw is well on the way to becoming the Novelist-Hero of the middle classes, for his version of the horrors of our time is congruous with the slicked-up liberal journalistic interpretations of mass media. What is more, Shaw is an unusually skillful writer who gives the impression of believing wholeheartedly in the profound truth of his own superficialities.

Meanwhile the translations continue to pour in from Italy, many of them extremely interesting and original works, often labeled as novels apparently only because the publishers are still uneasy about their reception by a novel-reading public. Elio Vittorini's *The Twilight of the Elephant* is a brief fable of a destitute Italian family saddled with a hulk of a grandfather whose paralyzed existence means the difference to them between survival and extinction, in the very food he consumes. He is referred to as "the elephant" by his worshipful daughter sometimes because of his massiveness and his past strength, sometimes because of his stupidity and blindness. Along comes a smut-faced roadmender who comprehends the situation, saves the family, and entices the

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elephant onto his feet and out of the house by playing on his fife. The theme of the patriarch as elephant is repeated over and over, with assorted variations—"we are all elephants"—somewhat in the manner of the experimental stories in the old *Transition*, and my personal reaction was one of utter fatigue and boredom out of all proportion to the length of the brief novella; but I am ready to concede that there may be many who will find esthetic virtues which have escaped me in Vittorini's fable.

The dust jacket of the new Carlo Levi volume describes it as "a new novel", which is stretching the term out of recognition, for *The Watch* is a highly personal memoir of Levi's experiences over a brief period in the early days after the Liberation. If names have been changed, even if incidents have been rearranged and invented in order to dramatize the author's emotional reaction to the time when it looked as though Italy might really be reborn, that is hardly sufficient reason to charge Levi with having committed a novel. There are other criticisms that should be made of the manner in which *The Watch* has been presented. The anonymous translation, although occasionally rising to lyrical heights, seems to have been done in haste: "'And why did you come back?' asked Matteo with interest, who, as an old immigrant, looked on America as his second fatherland." And while the publishers have mercifully spared us the fantastic collection of footnotes citing Stalin, Hemingway, Veblen, and 123 others which appeared in the Italian edition, they have not attempted to cut the text itself, which in this case is a pity; for *The Watch* is as undisciplined as a writer's private journal. Description after minute description of the noses, chins, eyes, and ears of passersby who have no connection with the narrative other than their momentary impingement on Levi's consciousness are excellent as practice notations but almost disastrous in an ambitious work like *The Watch*.

Levi's intoxication with his own prose does more than slow the pace of his narrative. It obscures his major design, a philosophic and poetic conception of the passage of time as illustrated by his own symbolic experiences in 1946; and most important, it conceals those really beautiful passages which disclose with charm and vivacity not only the author, but Italy as well. If it were possible to compress this volume to such scenes as the midnight discussions of the young journalist-intellectuals, the frantic bus ride from Rome to Naples with a brigand firing wildly through the windows, the encounter with a corpse in the corridor of a palace-roominghouse, the tour through a hideous rat-conquered Roman slum with a brilliantly sketched lovesick composer in search of his lost mistress—then we might have a work of permanence and stature. As it is, *The Watch* is by turns thrilling and exasperating, graceful and tedious. It makes one wonder whether Levi, whose gifts are equal to those of almost any other European, will ever succeed in harnessing his furious talents to the precise demands of an art form with architectural as well as pictorial elements.

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DANIEL AARON

Stephen Crane[1]

STEPHEN CRANE seems out of place in the age of Howells. One does not associate him with the "decorous thing, decorously done," or with "that mental modesty" as characteristic of our western hemisphere (according to one of his contemporaries) "as the goldenrod and the arbutus." His short and still mysterious life, his penchant for dogs and prostitutes and children, his dedication to war and his profane morality separate him from a roaring boy scout like Frank Norris or a talented aesthete like Henry B. Fuller. Norris wrote of an America "brutal in its ambition, arrogant in the new found knowledge of its giant strength." Fuller, "condemned to residence on a muckheap," he complained to Howells, tried to dignify the Chicago milieu from which he could not escape by "annexing it to the principality of Literature." He strove for a "moderate but accurate objectivity." Crane, the unromantic impressionist, regarded the world like his young hobo in the fine sketch, "An Experiment in Misery." He, too, was a kind of outcast who wore a criminal expression "that comes with certain convictions" and carried a heavy burden of guilt, but he was also a defiant rebel like his "Ominous Baby," a frequenter of the dark side streets in Fuller's principality of literature.

Before the appearance of Mr. Berryman's book, most of the people who wrote about Crane regarded him as a curious 'sport' and devoted more attention to his personality and career than to his literary accomplishments. He was likely to be dismissed, said Edward Garnett, as a "picturesque reporter." H. G. Wells's tribute in the *North American Review* (1900) still remains one of the most perceptive estimates of his talents; Garnett's notice, written shortly before Crane died, is less convincing but intelligently appreciative; Conrad's introductory memoir to Beer's biography is an irritatingly self-conscious and patronizing report. Thomas Beer's *Stephen Crane*, as biography, is far better than Mr. Berryman's study, but the newer book is the first truly critical treatment of Crane as a writer.

Of the volumes of the new American Men of Letters series that have appeared thus far, this one is the most personal, the most arbitrary, the most passionately assertive. Mr. Berryman does not apologize for his subject, but he suspects an organized indifference to Crane among the anonymous public and presents him almost truculently. In the more purely biographical portions of the book, he pays Crane the questionable compliment of emulating his tone and manner, but the elliptical phrasing, the wrenched antitheses that so often give distinction to Crane's stories are not well-suited to conventional biography.

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[1]STEPHEN CRANE, by *John Berryman*. The American Men of Letters Series. William Sloane Associates. $4.00.

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Mr. Berryman stands in front of Stephen Crane and explains him too solicitously; it is not always clear whether he is quoting or paraphrasing him. Even though he has brought Beer's biography up to date, corrected old mistakes and introduced some new material, large portions of his book merely retell less engagingly what Beer has already recorded. He departs from Beer and makes his real contribution when he drops his role of biographer and pauses to comment on particular stories and poems.

In the last two concluding chapters especially, free at last from the burden of the narrative, he has many brilliant things to say. No one, in my opinion, has looked so closely at Crane's prose or analyzed his poetry and fiction so intelligently. I am not referring to the Freudian probings, or to the suggestive but sometimes heavy-handed psychologizing, but rather to Mr. Berryman's understanding of Crane's intent, to his sense (to paraphrase Edward Garnett) of what the surface betrays. Crane, he says, "is simultaneously *at war with* the people he creates and *on their side*"; his characters have "to run a gauntlet to the author's sympathy." In Crane's stories, he observes, pathos and irony, horror and humor are indistinguishably blended, and the "consequences of these recognitions, bitterness and horror, disguise themselves in his grotesquerie of concept and style, his velocity, his displacement of rage."

Mr. Berryman also points out that unlike Frank Norris ("a romantic moralist," he calls him, "with a style like a great wet dog"), Crane was not a naturalist, in the sense that naturalism accumulates laboriously and omits nothing, but a selective writer and an impressionist so far as method is concerned. The distinction is a good one even though Crane shares more of the attitudes of the so-called American Naturalists than Mr. Berryman is ready to admit.

In disproving Conrad's contention that Crane was only an impressionist, however, and after noting Crane's inclusion of the realistic and the fantastic, Mr. Berryman maintains that Crane owed "nothing whatever, apparently, to painting." This may or may not be true, but his remark that Crane "does not use color in the least like a painter" is more dubious. Perhaps the word "impressionist" is the wrong one here, because the Impressionists actually thought of themselves as objectivists who merely caught the surface of things. Crane's vibrant and personal imagery, his strong emotions that discharge themselves in his language, suggest the post-impressionists who painted what they felt as well as what they saw. Such images in Crane's stories as the station house standing like a monstrous crab, the thick fat puffings of the engine, the swinging doors of the saloon snapping like ravenous lips, the bums snoring and heaving in the flop-house like stabbed fish are expressionistic, and the primitive colors which Mr. Berryman notes in Crane's prose, the screaming reds and blues and yellows, were to become the hallmarks of the Fauves when Americans were introduced to them in the Armory Show of 1913.

I mention this if only to place Crane as a forerunner of the next generation

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of writers and painters who tried to articulate their feelings about music and words and color in the manifestoes of the day. Like them he had conscientiously fulfilled Emerson's injunction (copied in his notebook, Mr. Berryman tells us), to do "something strange and extravagant" and like the Futurists and the Imagists had "broken the monotony of a decorous age." Thirteen years after Crane's death, Mabel Dodge, discussing the subject of post-impressionism in prose, declared that Gertrude Stein was doing in words what Picasso was doing with paint. "Each time," she wrote, "that beauty has been reborn in the world, it has needed complete readjustment of sense perceptions, grown all accustomed to the blurred outlines, faded colors, the death in life of beauty in decline. It has become jaded from over-familiarity, from long associations and from inertia." What Mabel Dodge said of Gertrude Stein could have been applied equally well to Crane, although he had apparently been all but forgotten by the time of the "explosion in the shingle factory." He too used "familiar words to create perceptions, conditions, and states of being, never before quite consciously experienced," and achieved his effect, as Gertrude Stein did, by using words that struck him "as having the meaning they *seem* to have." The differences between the abstract incantations of Gertrude Stein and the "barbarous" language of Crane are probably greater than their similarities, but both of them selected words for their inherent rather than their accepted meaning, and both helped to shape modern American prose style.

To H. G. Wells, Crane was the "new man", detached, as no other American writer before him, from the traditions of English criticism, and Mr. Berryman emphasizes this originality while conceding that Crane "concentrates tendencies and powers already tentatively in play." He plays down these influences, however, and Crane, the private writer, is somehow abstracted from Crane, the social man. Such matters as his feud with the New York police, his reporting of the Spanish-American war, his vignettes of the Bowery, are conceived of as literary episodes, and Mr. Berryman, who does not hesitate to speculate freely on the psycho-analytical implications of Crane's writings, is surprisingly reticent when it comes to Crane's social or religious beliefs. Crane was no muckraker, to be sure, and always conveyed his convictions indirectly, through a "long logic", as he said. At the same time, he was a man of the nineties who observed and responded to events. If he never committed himself to any cause, if he remained an isolato, happier when abused and ridiculed, as he told Howells, and afraid only of being diverted from what he called "the pursuit of truth", he yet took sides and made alliances. He identified himself unsentimentally with the derelicts he described in "The Men in the Storm" (you can see them in Louis Hine's marvelous photographs of the unemployed roughly contemporaneous with Crane's sketch), and expressed his vision of life through them. They swear "grimly and desperately, it is true, but yet with a wondrous undereffect, indefinable and mystic, as if there was some kind of humor in this catastrophe, in this situation of a night of snow-laden winds."

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SEYMOUR KRIM

Theodore Dreiser[1]

IT WOULD BE PLEASANT to be able to report that Professor Mathiessen's posthumous volume on Theodore Dreiser does credit to both men. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As a whole, this is a pale, conservative, unimaginative and frequently boring book. It is "adequate" as an introduction to Dreiser only in that it is objective and can give the reader a general notion of the novelist's stature. It does not give us the penetrating, digging kind of criticism that Dreiser needs and that might have been expected from Mathiessen in view of his earlier work. Dreiser, who had strong grass roots and spanned a rapidly changing period in our national life (1871-1945), would have seemed an almost perfect subject for Mathiessen's America First critical mind. Unfortunately, the critic never seems to have come to grips with his material in any personal, engaged sense; he is judicious and responsible enough in his evaluations—"sane" is the word—but contributes little new illumination of his own to this remarkable figure.

The book is both a biography and a criticism, according to what seems to be the established procedure in The American Men of Letters series. In theory this is probably a good idea, especially with novelists; there is a nice justice in writing about a novelist in the same way that he wrote about his personages: that is, relating ideas to the full thicket of the man's life rather than abstracting them. In Professor Mathiessen's hands, however, the conjunction of biography and criticism is not made with much expertness. The biographical data are given in a lump at the beginning of the book, and take Dreiser up to the publication of his first novel and through the nervous breakdown which followed, and then are only weakly doled out until the end. Ideally, the critical and biographical aspects should have been welded together "without joint or wem"; but this requires a specific kind of artistry, the lack of which it is probably unfair to hold against Mathiessen. Even so, the critic does not do as much as he might have with the biography; he sets down the facts of Dreiser's personal life quite flatly—it reminded me of a grocery-list—using much that Dreiser himself wrote in *A Book About Myself*.

There is nothing wrong about Mathiessen's drawing upon the novelist for information which could not be gotten elsewhere; the point is simply that Dreiser did the job much better himself. Dreiser's father was a German Catholic weaver who came to this country in 1844 to escape conscription. In his son's eyes he was a narrow bigot, a cold and ignorant man. Dreiser's mother, of

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[1]THEODORE DREISER, by *F. O. Mathiessen*. The American Men of Letters Series. William Sloane Associates. $3.50.

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whom he was Freudianly fond, was the daughter of a Czech farmer, and a Mennonite. It was into this home of rigid and conflicting religious faiths that Dreiser was born in August, 1871, in Terre Haute, Indiana. Surrounded by poverty and ignorance—and by ten brothers and sisters—his childhood had that objective misery which separates the tangible 19th Century from the floating 20th. Professor Mathiessen, drawing on *A Book About Myself*, traces Dreiser's stumbling development, his haphazard schooling, his first jobs in Chicago as salesman and factory hand, and his desire to become a newspaperman, finally gratified in 1893 when he found work with the *Chicago Globe*. It was upon being exposed as a reporter to big-city politics that Dreiser absorbed that prodigious knowledge of urban life which is unsurpassed in our literature. Some of the quality of Dreiser's attitude toward Chicago at that time, the manner in which he identified with the Hurstwoods and Cowperwoods, is suggested more dramatically in Alfred Kazin's uneven *On Native Grounds* than in Professor Mathiessen's study.

When it comes to criticism, Mathiessen's method is to discuss each of the important novels in the order in which they were written. The critic's assessments are preceded by a synopsis of the story of each book, helpful to the student reader, but much too prim and professorial for the person who knows the novels. As for Mathiessen's judgements—each novel is weighed separately and methodically, like a pound of steak—they are reasonable enough, but uninspired. Dreiser's grossness, lack of form, sentimentality, gaucherie—all that we already know—are commented on sensibly. But what we don't know, the variety of treasure lodged in this hulk of a writer, is not brought to light. Professor Mathiessen is sensitive to Dreiser's compassion and brutal integrity, but he never seems to put his finger on those qualities that often make him uncannily readable despite his widely publicized "unreadability." He gives us no indication of the scope of Dreiser's interest and curiosity; he fails to notice the lack of self-consciousness which allowed the writer to triumph over his own clumsiness; and he does not comment specifically enough on Dreiser's personal radicalism.

James T. Farrell has remarked that had Dreiser not written, the entire direction of realistic literature in this country would have taken a different course. Whether we accept this or not, statements by Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson and others testify to Dreiser's enormous liberating influence on their early work. And yet, in Professor Mathiessen's book, the impact of Dreiser's pioneering attempt to write the "truth about life" in America as he knew it is hardly given its due. This notion of truth, the very "naturalism" which seems to have finally reached a point of exhaustion in our literature, was largely instituted in America by Dreiser, and has influenced writers who have never even read him. This influence is not sufficiently appreciated by Mathiessen; more important, the critic makes no attempt to deal with the problem of "realism" or "naturalism" in the light of today's needs in fiction. One would have

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thought that any serious investigation of Dreiser would have to be concerned with this. Will Dreiser's "reality" survive our newer, trickier, Chinese-box one? Or will he pay the penalty of having loved his time too much, and his art too little, and rot in the libraries? Professor Mathiessen does not ask these questions.

What kind of living influence is Dreiser today? We may well ask. It seems clear that he will not inspire young writers to imitate his art, or lack of it. It does not exist outside of his own mammoth personality; withdraw the personality, and the art collapses. Dreiser lives by virtue of himself, and his great effect on other writers, and men in general, is a personal one. Like Lawrence he is an eccentric, and like Lawrence he bequeaths us himself rather than the elaborated completeness of a "major" art; being nothing but himself, he shames us into being nothing but ourselves. In addition, he inspires the small boy in all of us by virtue of his strength, independence, and sensational honesty. Thus it would seem that his gifts are those we usually admire more in life than in literature; in an ultimate sense this will very probably be true, and Dreiser will suffer from having been a great American rather than a great novelist, which he comes close to being. But there is little question that long after "naturalism" is a dead issue in fiction Dreiser will be a live one. Just as he transcends his own crudities as a writer—makes them endearing, in fact, like the ugly features of a noble man—so he transcends his status as naturalist.

It seems likely that as time goes by Dreiser's output will be weeded out, like that of every prolific writer. The stretches of desert in his work—and there are many—look worse every year; he was badly in need of a good editor. *An American Tragedy*, one is sure, will either have to be edited with insight and "feel", or else die. But the four or five novels that remain seem quite as likely to hold readers some years from now as they do today. From Dreiser the young writer learns no sense of craft, as he does from Dreiser's contemporary, Edith Wharton. He learns nothing—except what not to do—in the way of application of taste, skill or narrative techniques. When he reads Dreiser he has the feeling that he is encountering not art, but a vast natural force; thus different human responses are brought into play. Where one novelist delights us with finesse, another with shrewdness, a third with sharp insights, Dreiser inundates us by the steady, inexorable flow of his interest in his characters. There beats through the pages of his books a consistent, singular rhythm, which is the basis of style, and which imposes on the reader a sense of unstoppable movement. Like a man hypnotized, Dreiser unceasingly strokes his characters, and by his love, pity, and complete ingenuousness—he writes about them as if they were alive, not figures in a novel—it all comes alive for us. This is not art, we feel; this is life—which is precisely the novelist's supreme artifice. And yet the irony is that Dreiser, like Dickens, achieves this with no artifice whatsoever; it is the result of total immersion and total belief in the reality of what he is writing; were he more "conscious", less carried away, we could not respond to his books as we do.

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At the same time—and since our too-aware time demands this kind of critical aside, even though we should be concerned with what Dreiser is, not with what he isn't—this innocence prevents the novelist from final mastery. He is not a free man, like the consummate master. Writing in the fog of his own being—like a somnambulist—he is not free to shape, point up, tone down, and do all the thousand and one other things that a man in complete control can do. Thus he pays for his innocence by our impatience or boredom; by seeming freakish at times, so that we want to laugh at the homeliness that so moves us; by being, finally, a unique personality who can do nothing without proving that he is "different" in a personal sense. This gives his work the semi-clinical fascination that holds us to people who, in a personal way, react much differently from the majority of men. The difficulty is that we cannot help judging them as unusual Barnum phenomena, with a mixture of admiration and head-shaking, because they are the kind of people who don't know enough to come in out of the rain. This being so, they remain in one sense the curiosities of literature, no matter how much they enrich us.

But can we afford not to pay homage to any true enrichment, no matter how imperfect? In view of the poverty and smallness of most American novelists in comparison to Dreiser, I do not think so.

GEORGE SCHLOSS

Sherwood Anderson [1]

WHAT IS DISTURBING about these two books is not so much their differences as their similarities, the differences being personal, the shelters *they* have built, whereas the similarities are cultural, the climate *we* live in.

To take the differences first: Schevill has adopted the standard biographical approach, a chronological ordering of events interspersed with critical comment. Howe has written more of a critical biography with the emphasis on exegesis, and I do mean exegesis. The advantage of Schevill's method is that despite the length and dullness, you get some idea, through letters, anecdotes, and a general piling up of information, of what happened and what Anderson was like. Not as bright, Schevill is more humane and has evidently a greater regard for his subject, even though Howe can conclude his book with this statement: "Yet

[1]SHERWOOD ANDERSON: HIS LIFE AND WORK, by *James Schevill*. University of Denver Press. $4.00. SHERWOOD ANDERSON, by *Irving Howe*. The American Men of Letters Series. William Sloane Associates. $3.50.

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there were a few moments when he (Anderson) spoke, as almost no one else among American writers, with the voice of love." This is probably true, but it is more than we can say for Howe at any time.

I should guess that Howe would consider Schevill's book old-fashioned and quaint, but Howe's academicism is only a bit harder to detect. It is modern; we can say that much for it, but it is no less a period piece. If Schevill's is pre-first War, Howe's is post-second.

Unfortunately, Schevill *is* quaint. And ingenuous. His book is full of things like this: "The great polyglot city, often called the forty-ninth state, had always fascinated him" (Anderson in New York). And a little later on: "His new love was Elizabeth Prall, a small, quiet, introverted person whose family lived in Berkeley, California," and so on. This is beyond cliché. Not so Howe who, to coin a phrase, revels in it: "Here he had dipped into the unconscious resources of the race, for the archtypal caress is a collective datum as well as an individual memory, the same in Combray as in Clyde." Despite his frequent ponderosity Howe can also be glib: "Through observing the woman's death, the boy has enlarged his knowledge of the human condition to which he too is subject; he has learned that an awareness of death is a condition for an intense immersion in life."

He can even be unintelligible: "The theme of *Many Marriages* can still be defended as 'in itself' valid; in American life repression inflicts a fearful damage, and to escape it is both right and necessary. But it is the perverse badness of the novel that it reduces its own truth to a half-truth—which is to say, finally to an untruth; and that this reduction is the consequence not of a corrupt intention but of an indifference to those presences of complexity which must beset every truth and without which no truth can long survive." Make of that what you will.

Howe's book is full of current psychiatric jargon and he has an annoying habit of prefacing each of his very personal and not so very enlightening psycho-analyses of Anderson's works with an "of course" or a "naturally". His attitude is unbalanced. He can spend a whole chapter, interesting enough, I suppose, and pyrotechnical, if somewhat irrelevant and pretentious, on Anderson in the "Lawrencian orbit", and pass over lightly, since, we surmise, it is not serious enough, Anderson's not undistinguished journalism. His prose is at best clever but harsh, hardly, you would think, a proper prerequisite for discussing a writer who, if nothing else, relied on tone and mood, the meaning between the lines. One can only take Howe's intentions at face value; but one wonders why, other than attempting to rescue *Winesburg* from the adolescents, he has bothered to write about Anderson at all, since what he concedes with his head he retracts with his heart. And although he may be justified in dispensing with a great deal of what Anderson said about himself, he is surely haggling when he writes: "and sometimes Anderson trusted himself a bit too much, as when he took up painting during a 1920 vacation and

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with *egregious naiveté* (my italics) wrote to Frank, " 'By disregarding all roads taken by other painters I have seen, I have already found out some things.' " I was surprised to learn later from Schevill that Anderson had two shows and painted on and off for years. Now I myself took to painting at one time—I only mention it since Anderson is not here to testify for himself, but I can vouch for him: by going ahead on my own, I learned a few things too. Which is all the poor man said.

Lest this all seem like haggling on *my* part, I want to indicate the especially nagging and ungenerous spirit of Howe's book as a sign of the times, and more, to point out the presence in both books, so different in conception, of the very provincialism the two critics are always complaining of in the American scene.

One of the most unpleasant aspects of provincialism is the dogmatic quality of the criticism it calls forth, since the critic always considers himself on the side of the angels; that is, of the artist. One form this provincialism takes is a constant carping as to, not only the failures of American writers, but the supposed causes of these failures. Now some of this carping is justified; but a great deal of it comes, I believe, from too gullibly swallowing everything the artist says about himself. Artists complain a great deal and prefer, like all of us, to blame every inconvenience on their surroundings, and certainly in America they have always had fine opportunity to do this. Still, it is tiresome to hear chanted on every side the platitude that the literary atmosphere here is not, or was not, like Europe's—precisely America's distinction. I do not see how we can separate American writers, or any other writers, from the strength of their shortcomings, and I mean, among others, those that are culturally acquired. To charge a society with responsibility for its defects without even pointing to its advantages is unjust. And it is also provincial. It leads to the most disastrous mistake of all: the effort to exempt the artist from sharing in his own fate. The implication in both books—counteracted only by a single paragraph in Schevill's—is that the responsibility for Anderson's miseries lay not so much in his own character as in the character of his America. Disenchanted by America's notorious disregard for literary people, the two critics have set up a narrow determinism which betrays them into a false—though it may be a logical—reading of history.

What both books unwittingly reveal is that contrary to general opinion Anderson did not have a bad time of it. His early environment was not inordinately unfriendly. After his first struggles he was accepted by his colleagues, and came to know many of them. He learned from some and taught others. At one period he was even acclaimed. He travelled; he managed to build a house in Virginia and get by somehow on his writing. A rare instance in American letters, he was even employed for a while as a writer by the Government. I, for one, cannot feel sorry for him, and I doubt seriously whether in some more auspicious time he would have done better, or even as well, materially or otherwise. He got his work done somehow, even though,

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at the end, he was victimized by his own virtues. The surge of will that lifted him into a tradition and a style later engulfed him, forced him to write after he had nothing to say, engaged him in constant distractions as he sought new material, and finally enslaved him to "art". All of this, though moving, was as ignoble as any ancient servitude and made his collapse seem not only more apparent than it was but more destined.

It is understandable that, put on the defensive by the increasing neglect of Anderson in recent years, both books should dwell on this collapse. Schevill, in his reverence for the man, even goes so far as to suggest that the unfinished *Memoirs*, fragmentary as it is, represents a return to the relative mastery of the *Winesburg* period. Since his claim rests largely on the unpublished manuscript, while the version compiled by Paul Rosenfeld in *The Anderson Reader* is the only one available to us, we can leave it in somewhat doubtful abeyance. At any rate, what comes through to those of us acquainted with Anderson's work, but only knowing his life in the legend, is not what a debacle, but what a victory the life really was. A semi-literate at twenty-five, he had written *Winesburg* fifteen years later and was to go on to do a few more short stories which will continue to be read. There can be no doubt that however often he sang off-key, he yet had a voice, which is rare enough at any time, in any place.

Although I have no quarrel with either of these two critics as to their overall appraisal of Anderson's work, I still cannot recommend books which reveal, really, so much more about their authors than about their subject. What I object to primarily is an attitude, a tone—particularly in Howe, who belongs to that school which sees in criticism an opportunity for a ghoulish yet humorless delight. Anderson's own proverbial mistrust of the intellect at least saved him from mere dull pedantry or cheap cleverness.

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